

THE LOVE STORY OF A MORMON

By
WINIFRED GRAHAM

*Author of "Esra the Mormon," "Mary," "The Enemy
of Woman," "The Needlewoman," etc.*

With a Preface by the
RIGHT, REV. BISHOP WELLDON
Dean of Manchester

POPULAR EDITION



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PREFACE

Miss Winifred Graham has asked me to write a few lines of preface to her forthcoming novel. It is a novel with a purpose; but as being such it is all the more valuable, for it copes with a definite evil. Like Miss Graham I have been for some time past concerned with the Mormon propagandâ in England. I have learnt something of its secrecy, its assiduity, and its success; I know how important it is to warn young emotional religious girls, living perhaps in more or less unhappy homes, against its seductiveness. But a novel is often a better mentor than a sermon or a speech, if only because it appeals to a larger circle of people.

The Mormonism which Miss Graham opposes is the Mormonism of the Salt Lake City. There polygamy has long flourished, and there it still exists. It is in fact the distinctive feature of Mormonism in Utah; for apart from polygamy that Mormonism is dull and unintelligible.

Girls who emigrate from England to Utah find themselves members of an immorally constituted society.

There is no great need, I think, to invoke the arm of the law in England against Mormonism. If the light is once let in upon it, it will die of itself. The moral sense of English men and women will rise against it. It is my earnest hope that Miss Graham's literary skill may prove efficacious in the crusade in which she has played so notable and so noble a part.

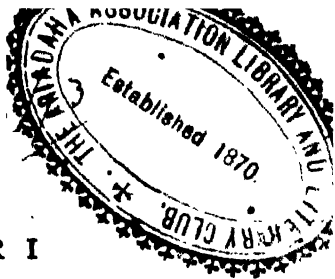
J. E. C. WELLDON.

*The Deanery,
Manchester.*

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CHAPTER I

VISIONS

A DAILY governess, young, fair-skinned, and slender, drew on her mackintosh in the hall of a grey brick house in the great city of Riverpool. She lived outside the town, and a long, monotonous walk was part of her life's programme from Monday to Saturday. . .

Mrs. Lovesey was anything but a loving employer. This afternoon she followed Miss Abbott to the front door.

"Please understand," she said, "that if you are late again I shall be obliged to give you notice. Unpunctuality is a bad example for the children. You were six minutes late yesterday, and the clock had already struck the hour when you arrived this morning. It would be quite easy for me to get some one who lives nearer, and then I should not have to give lunch."

The girl murmured an apology. A bright crimson flush stole from her cheek to her ear as she stepped on to the pavement.

"I should have been quite early," she told herself, "if he had not spoken to me again."

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The April rain beat down upon her as she turned her face homeward. She walked slowly—as one in deep thought.

It had been a hard struggle to bring her mind down to elemental teaching since a new, strange influence broke upon her life, changing the whole train of her ideas.

If some one had told her a week ago that she would have stopped to talk to a stranger on the lonely road from Briar Cottage to the Lovesey's cheerless abode in Pool Street, she would have scorned the idea. She could never have imagined she would be magnetized by a pair of large brown eyes, set in a singularly attractive countenance. She had disbelieved in the power of hypnotic suggestion, and she did not think of it now, as she recalled her first glimpse of Ziba Wayne.

He stood suddenly in her path like some wonderful vision of all-conquering manhood. He was tall, well-proportioned, and she fancied the sunlight played round his figure as if to give it a touch of divinity. It seemed, by some inward power, he forced her to return his deep inquiring gaze. There was an air of dignity about him which demanded attention. She experienced a sensation of awe and reverence. Oddly enough she was conscious of no great surprise when he boldly informed her she was in the presence of a Saint.

"My child," he said, in a low, kind voice, "do

not fear to talk with me. I have been sent to you with a message of salvation. I am an instrument destined to hold the keys of restoration for the renovation of the world."

It sounded so strange and bewildering that she could not feel offended. His spiritual elation apparently swept aside conventionality, as he played upon the girl's emotional temperament, like a strong gust of wind sweeping the keys of an Æolian harp.

Her curiosity roused, she listened while he spoke to her of a race of men dwelling in the world at that moment, who were chosen vessels ordained by angels to be apostles and elders in the Church of Latter-Day Saints. He explained how he had come in the spirit and power of Elijah to unfurl in England the banner of freedom which waved triumphantly in the glorious West. He added that his spiritual insight told him that she might in time develop into a fit candidate for Zion, if she would but learn from his lips and help him to gather lambs into the fold.

Jacinth left him with a breathless promise to meet him again. She had even mentioned her hours of going and coming to her youthful pupils.

As she retraced her steps along the deserted road her mind was under a spell. She felt like a sleep-walker, carried away into some new romantic realm of emotional tension. She was afraid and yet joyful. There were tears in her eyes, though she smiled.

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The physical charm of the man appealed to her senses. All ignorant of the fact, she believed the warmth and beauty of the great Dispensation entered her soul, filling it with the glory of a new faith.

As she turned over Ziba's words in her impressionable brain, she caught sight of his tall figure in the distance. At that moment a wilful trick of Nature sent a ray of sunlight across the muddy road, turning his path to silver. A moment later the man was offering her his hand, and murmuring softly : " Welcome, Sister ! "

The rose tint deepened in Jacinth's delicately rounded cheeks, as she felt the charm of his presence and the assurance of his commanding manner.

" Perhaps," he said, " we shall at last have a few words together, without being pressed for time. Your day's work is over——"

" And yours ? " she queried.

He shook his head.

" I work for God and not for man, therefore my labour is never done," he answered, looking deeply into her eyes, and still retaining her trembling hand.

Jacinth was wondering why he was so different from ordinary men, and he read her thoughts, answering them aloud.

" I astonish you because I am not of your country, so your ways are not my ways. My whole life is given up to missionary work. Before long I shall

return to Zion across the sea; I hope and pray a whole shipload of emigrants may accompany me to the City of Saints. You, in your narrow sphere, cannot picture the majestic splendour, where Nature's eternal ramparts form smiling fastnesses of glory. I wish indeed your eyes could see our stronghold, where the wide Salt Lake lies in the valley's bosom, as if guarding the great white Temple, whose Gothic spires point to a cloudless sky. I often dream I am back in the broad, beautiful streets of my native town, walking beneath the Lombardy poplars, seeing the rock-ribbed mountains, and hearing the streams merrily dancing in a crystal flood. That is indeed a Promised Land. All our Saints yearn to live and die in Utah."

Jacinth listened chiefly because his voice had such a musical note, and his words appealed to her poetical fancy.

"I don't know anything about your country or your faith," she stammered, suddenly ashamed of her ignorance, "but, tell me, are you a Mormon?"

She put the question so simply that the man could easily see the word held no fear for her. Again he fixed one of his piercing looks on the attractive young face, and immediately Jacinth became dimly aware of some unexplained influence drawing her sympathies towards him. She was oblivious of any danger, she had lost all sense of shyness, she might have been talking to an old friend.

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"Yes," he replied, "I am proud to say I am a Mormon. Heaven grant I may some day be given the opportunity of revealing to you the great manifestations handed down to us in the Book of Mormon. Were your heart inclined to listen, you would hear the strains of angel harmonies, you would be like a disembodied spirit lifted up into the dazzling reality of imperishable blessedness. But first, my child, tell me something of your life. I want to understand you, that I may help your soul. You live alone, I believe, with your mother?"

He asked the question anxiously.

"Oh, no, my father is alive with us."

Ziba concealed a look of annoyance, and pulled his soft felt hat a little lower over his eyes.

Inwardly he was saying—

"I watched the house, and I only saw two women coming in and out."

"Father is an invalid," added Jacinth sadly. "His whole career was ruined through an accident. He had just begun to work his way up as under master at a very good school, and hoped to better his position in time, when one evil day a wealthy friend took him for a run in a magnificent motor-car. Mr. Panmore was a reckless driver, and it is said he had lunched rather too well. A terrible collision ensued, in which my father received such severe injuries to his spine that he has not walked for ten years. We live on a small income allowed us by

Mr. Panmore. He has been very kind in sending a number of leading physicians to see father. Some fancy that the spinal injuries are healing, and his prostrated condition is due to nervous debility. If a great shock roused him, such as an outbreak of fire in the house, he might possibly regain the power of his limbs."

Ziba put on a sympathetic expression.

"I should say it was very unlikely," he murmured, and she little guessed, as he sighed condolingly, that the wish was father to the thought.

"How do you pass your leisure hours?" he queried. "Do you interest yourself in any good work?"

Jacinth had a horror of boasting, and replied modestly—

"I don't know if one could call it a good work, but my Thursday evening girls are certainly a hobby. Mr. Panmore frequently sends my father very good books, so we have a regular library in our little home. I got a few girls together of the lower classes, who longed instinctively for culture. For nearly a year now we have formed a small Reading Society. We meet weekly, and read aloud to each other, holding a debate afterwards. You can't think how the girls appreciate this small effort to brighten their lives."

Ziba's eyes glistened as he drank in her words.

"Then by now you have quite a lot of influence

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with these young souls," he declared enthusiastically. "They are all unmarried, I suppose. Perhaps it lies in your hands to make them saintly wives and mothers. Why not turn your attention to their spiritual welfare, a far grander aim than earthly culture? Could you not meet one day in a place apart, say in a field where the spring flowers are blossoming, and let me address your little company? I could open out a new world to them. Like the holy men of old, I believe in visions, prophecy, tongues, and revelations. I am like a bright pillar of fire passing through the cold earth. I can even show you how to help and save loved ones who are dead. We Mormons have built innumerable temples, in which Baptism and other ordinances on behalf of deceased relatives and friends have been performed. The angel, whom John predicted would come to Earth, appeared to our prophet, Joseph Smith. I pray you read our handbooks, and judge of our religion for yourself." He pressed into her palm some leaflets headed *The Witnesses of Saints, Divine Authority, Baptism for the Dead, Brigham Young's Testimony*.

"I have no fear of my faith," he told her proudly. "We Mormons are accustomed to hard knocks from a stiff-necked generation. Unheeding of misrepresentation, we pass on our way with heads erect and eyes open, honest men with no masks on our faces or sophistry in our mouths."

Jacinth wondered why Heaven had been good enough to send this divine being across her path. Until the present moment the emotional side of her nature had never been seriously stirred, though she was engaged to be married to a friend of her childhood. Basil Hope had always been more like a son of the house, and bade fair to prosper in his engineering profession. She knew he worked entirely with the ambition of building up a home for the girl he loved. Her affection dwelt in fondness, his in a strong overmastering passion. She was the summit of all his ambitions. He lived only for the burning love she roused in his trustful nature.

"Are you vexed at my proposition? Will you let me meet the little reading circle?" he asked.

For a moment Jacinth appeared too overcome to answer.

"It would indeed be an honour," she gasped, "one we could never have hoped for. So far it has been kept entirely amongst ourselves."

Ziba hurriedly consulted an engagement book which he drew from his pocket.

"Let us fix the date at once," he said, "and beg all to keep their own counsel. I do not wish a crowd of relatives to interrupt the quiet intimacy of the proceedings. Perhaps it would be wiser not to mention at first that I am expounding to you the faith which is in me. Your people would say that Mormons believe in polygamy, and that plural

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wives are part of the creed. I confess that in old time, as in the Bible, more than one wife would be sealed to a Mormon, but now we marry as you do. It is better, however, to avoid controversy. Some day I may initiate you into the wonderful doctrine of Spiritual Wives."

They were nearing Briar Cottage. Jacinth warned him of the fact, and he instantly discovered the lateness of the hour, bidding her a speedy farewell.

"I will look for you to-morrow on your homeward walk," he whispered, "trusting that you may in the meantime have digested the literature which will open your eyes to the groundwork of our religion."

He watched the graceful figure moving away through the shadows to the house where the sweet-briars grew. He smiled slightly to himself, and rubbed his hands together as he turned to retrace his steps.

He knew his influence with women seldom failed; he had studied hypnotism in the States. The girls he tracked down would need to be armed like Achilles to ward off his attacks. The sect recognized his all-conquering charm in proselytism, a portion of their campaign needing the utmost finesse. Ziba was a past-master in the art of becoming all things to all whom he would ensnare. To young impressionable girls he represented Utah as a place of delight, where Jehovah reigned almost visibly among His chosen people. To the avaricious, he

would subtly dwell on the country's brilliant schemes for money-making. He described that centre of vast mining territories as a Paradise for the lonely, full of brothers and sisters who treated it like some great old homestead, welcoming pilgrims with open arms. Well he realized when once his nets had been cast, and girls had broken away from their parents, that the proselyting priest of this so-called "Canaan of Perfect Love" would easily lure them into polygamy. So he continued his work of snaring the peasant blood of Europe into the Secret Rites of the Endowment House, and the blasphemous assumptions of Utah.

Mrs. Abbott noticed a change in Jacinth.

"You are late," she said, glancing at the clock; "I have kept back the tea for nearly half an hour."

"I am afraid I walked very slowly," declared the girl, avoiding her mother's eyes. "The roads are deep in mud, and I am feeling rather tired. The Lovesey children were particularly trying to-day."

Mrs. Abbott drew a comfortable chair nearer to the hearth.

"I hope you are not going to be ill," she said. "You look so strangely flushed. It was this time last year the fever outbreak commenced."

Jacinth quickly reassured her on this point.

"I feel perfectly well, mother, but that long, lonely walk every day gives one time for thought. It seems as if some revelation were gradually chang-

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ing me into a different woman. I want to be more spiritual, I am afraid we are not religious enough."

By this time Mrs. Abbott became convinced that Jacinth was sickening for some disease. She concealed her fears and spoke cheerfully.

"Oh, don't worry about that, my dear; we haven't missed going to church on Sunday for many a year. In what way would you like to improve matters?"

Jacinth looked up, but her eyes held secrets.

"That's just what I don't know," she confessed, "but I think I shall be guided. Some one will be sent to show me the way."

Mrs. Abbott laid a cool hand on the girl's burning forehead.

"I have a piece of good news for you," she said. "I was going to keep it back for a surprise. Basil is coming here to-night. He has got some work at Riverpool. It means a good rise in salary, and he will take rooms close to us. He hopes sometimes to be able to finish early, and walk back with you. Any way, it will mean seeing much more of him than in the past."

Mrs. Abbott expected to see her daughter's face light up with sudden joy. The father and mother had both been revelling in the cheerful tidings.

Jacinth started uncomfortably, she interlaced her fingers, and her lips quivered. "I wish," she said, "he were coming any other night. I don't feel

inclined for his lovemaking. Somehow my mind is in the clouds."

Mrs. Abbott's face fell.

"Of course, if you are really knocked up, you must go to bed; it will be a great disappointment for the poor fellow. It isn't possible, Jacinth, you are going to change your mind? It would simply break Basil's heart, and be a terrible disappointment to your father, who already looks on him as a son."

Mrs. Abbott had never soared above her narrow sphere. She was not her husband's intellectual equal, read little, and busied herself with household affairs. She was frankly commonplace in appearance and tastes, laughingly acknowledging that Jacinth's beauty came from her father's side of the family. She had never been really one with her daughter, whose poetical nature yearned for some outlet beyond the limitations of Briar Cottage.

The Mormon stranger had suddenly filled some longing void. The little world around Jacinth mattered no more. She was in it, but not of its solid fibre. The fervour of fanaticism had entered her blood, placed there by the hypnotic suggestion of Ziba Wayne.

The souls of her reading girls weighed heavily on her mind. She fancied they called to her like drowning children, while fate demanded she should lead them to the godly stranger, waiting to show them the path of salvation. She longed to escape.

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to her room that she might devour the booklets which expounded this, to her, new faith.

"I will lie down, then when Basil comes I may feel sufficiently rested to see him," she told her mother wearily.

"Go in and kiss your father first," replied Mrs. Abbott. "He has been looking for you all day."

Jacinth went to the room of the bedridden man with lagging steps. She hoped he would not detain her, for now that her brain was so full of strange thoughts and speculations, even her natural love for him became swamped by the torrent of fresh ideas.

Hugh Abbott made a cheerful, uncomplaining invalid. The routine of infirmity lightened his burden more than any who watched his endurance could believe. Though the power of his limbs had deserted him, he was now free from pain, and looked so well, it was hard to realize years of suffering lay behind his marvellous patience. Absorbed in literature, he settled down to the uneventful days of an incurable case, resigned to his term of life imprisonment.

He smiled at Jacinth, patting her hand. "You have heard of Basil's promotion," he said. "I fear we shall soon be losing you now. The thought of your happiness is the one bright spot in my life. Basil will make a splendid husband. You know, Jacinth, being here so much alone seems to give me a keener insight than when I moved about the

world like other people. I have watched your lover grow to manhood, and he has never once disappointed me. He is the best possible type of an honest, hard-working Englishman, with plenty of fight in him if occasion demanded. Let us hope he may live to defend you against the world, long after your mother and I have gone the way of all flesh."

A sense of smothered indignation leapt into Jacinth's heart as she listened to her father's words. They conveyed the idea that women were weak and helpless, relying on men to fight their battles, and ward off sorrow.

"I don't know that I want to be defended," she said lightly, then in a more serious tone: "I have a surer guard in God's angels, perhaps they have made me their special care."

Mr. Abbott raised his eyebrows as he looked curiously at his daughter. He had never heard her speak like this before. "Let us hope so," he murmured.

She turned away, anxious to be alone, and as she did so, one of Ziba's leaflets fluttered from a small bag she carried on the coverlet. She did not notice its presence till it was already in her father's hands. Then she tried to snatch it away before he could read the contents. But Hugh Abbott was too quick for her, and scanned the printing with knitted brows.

"A Mormon pamphlet, as I live!" he muttered.

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between his teeth. "How did you get hold of this, Jacinth?"

He put the question fiercely, and the frown did not lighten on his forehead.

The girl had no time to think, and on the spur of the moment she told the first lie of her life.

"I picked it up in the road." She tried to speak naturally. "I have not read it, father."

He tore the paper across angrily, and scattered it in tiny pieces on the floor.

"Just like those devils!" he said. "I suppose that is a new way of proselytizing, to drop their pernicious literature about the streets. Do you know they are becoming a perfect plague in Liverpool, and I have good reason to believe there is a scheme on foot to show them up in the Press for the safety of Great Britain? It is amazing that people can get taken in still by this extraordinary imposture. If ever a Mormon comes to our door bring him in to me. He will hear something he does not like."

Jacinth turned deadly pale. Each syllable fell like a stab on her heart.

"It is hardly a fit subject to discuss with you," replied her father, "but perhaps it is as well you should know the kind of men they are. It is their aim to delude unbalanced and ignorant people; they are wreckers of homes, decoyers of young girls, whom they entice away from England by the

lure of a religion which is in reality merely a fraud and delusion. They select for their canvassers, I am told, the handsomest men in their ranks, who cultivate a persuasive manner calculated to conceal the fact that they are wolves in disguise. Truth plays no part in their programme. They refrain from preaching polygamy, while they practise it in secret. They are simply a society of polygamists, and should be hounded out of any Christian country."

Jacinth turned cold as stone, she could almost fancy her blood congealed. For a moment she felt inclined to confess all. Her talk with the Latter-Day Saint, his suggestion that she should further their propaganda, and the ecstasy with which his words filled her. Possibly she could make her father believe that after all these much-abused Mormons were misrepresented by a world jealous of their godliness. Perhaps, if she argued the point, the faith with which Ziba inspired her would be snatched away like a beautiful jewel, destroyed as a sunlit dewdrop shaken from the petals of a dead flower. Such a voice as the one she heard that day could surely never lie. Had he not said, "We marry as you do." After all, her father was probably prejudiced, easily frightened by old scandals which no longer existed. His ill-health made for nervousness. Deep within her there dwelt the strong magnetic suggestion implanted by a master will, called into life by the uncanny power of mesmerism.

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She saw beside her the visionary form of her new acquaintance radiant with a halo of budding romance. His voice rang in her ears, her fingers tingled yet with the pressure of his hand. The very thought of his subtle attraction made the idea of Basil's kisses nauseating.

She moved to the door, as if the discussion no longer interested her.

"I promised mother I would lie down before Basil arrives for supper," she said. "I haven't much time, so we will talk of the Mormons later."

"Oh, yes, they will keep!" laughed Mr. Abbott, having expended his wrath in violent words. "You must be at your best this evening, we don't want Basil to say you are looking overworked."

Jacinth hurried to her room and locked the door. Nothing was further from her thoughts than rest. Feverishly she drew the remaining pamphlets from her satchel, devouring their contents with glowing eyes. Mystic words sank deeply into the soil ready to receive the message Ziba had brought.

She did not believe her father's indictment, that the practice of plural wifehood still existed. To her the taint of materialism had been purged from the Mormon faith. Ziba represented the home life of his people as being full of purity, love, and joy.

At least she might give her "reading girls" the chance of refusing Elder Wayne's offer. She would hold no brief for him, but let them judge for

themselves. He had implanted in her mind an intense longing to see that distant land which he described as representing their "Holy of Holies." She could picture men and women, robed in white, grouped round the great baptismal font, upheld by golden oxen, each ready to receive the joys of celestial glory. There, all was peace and happiness. Already in fancy she stood on the shore of the Great Salt Lake. One of the pamphlets described its stimulating atmosphere, and the quiet order and beauty at Zion.

It came as a shock when the Abbotts' one little maid announced Mr. Hope had arrived!

CHAPTER II

THE KISS OF A SAINT

JACINTH'S mother prepared him for her indisposition, so the girl's listless manner did not come as a surprise. She barely returned his warm kiss of greeting. In her heart she knew that a sense of revulsion stirred, she was no longer the simple, merry maiden who so naturally accepted his proposal of marriage.

She only congratulated him on the news of his rise when her mother reminded her of the altered circumstances.

He quickly excused the oversight by declaring, "Poor little Jacinth looked played out."

"I am afraid," he declared, "you cannot indulge in the fashionable rest cure, but I hope soon all this teaching business may end. There is every probability of our being able to settle down in about a year from now. Time flies so quickly, we shall be house-hunting before next spring."

He uttered the words with a radiant smile. Success had added to his good looks, but Jacinth failed to observe this, since she compared his appearance disparagingly with that of Ziba. Basil's eyes

contained none of the piercing mysticism which added attraction to the stranger's gaze. Basil was frankly man, while an invisible halo of saintship sat on the Mormon's brow.

A deep flush of annoyance crept to her cheek when her mother announced at supper that Jacinth had picked up a Brigham Young tract.

"Your father was quite vexed," Mrs. Abbott declared with a lenient smile; "however, I quite reassured him. I am sure our Jacinth is the last girl in the world to be attracted by Mormonism."

Basil laughed, and the sound jarred on his fiancée's nerves.

"I once met one of the Prophet's sons in Liverpool," he said, "and the fellow had the audacity to tell me I should make a good Elder if I came over to his people. I am afraid he received a great deal of chaff. His celebrated parent was an indulgent father, but a numerous husband. He married two hundred wives, so we said, 'He loved not wisely but two hundred well.' In fact, he was terribly married, the most married man in the United States."

Jacinth felt compelled to repeat Ziba's sentiments.

"That was all in the past," she said. "People might throw in our faces that Abraham, who is called in the New Testament 'The Father of the Faithful,' was a polygamist. I can't help thinking

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the Mormons may be misjudged. I always like to hear both sides."

For the first time Basil looked a little uneasy. He knew that Riverpool was seething with Mormons, and that they still believed polygamy to be a celestial law. This part of their religion (originating in the licentious heart of Joseph Smith) was as much alive to-day, as when the birth-rate was first increased by the theory that a multitude of little spirits were anxiously seeking tabernacles for this, their second, estate.

Now Jacinth felt his eyes upon her with something of censure.

"More than one family in this neighbourhood mourn a missing daughter who left her home for the unspeakable degradation of Utah," he said. "There the law against polygamy is not enforced, because the laws are in the hands of polygamists. Their system is one of blackest superstition. . How could anything good spring from the blood-drenched page of the Mountain Meadows massacre? That must stain its history for all time. This stupendous swindle thrives on dupes caught by glaring misrepresentation. And I have often thought I would like to go more deeply into the subject, and find out exactly what they are doing, in our midst."

Every word seemed engraven on Jacinth's brain as she compared Basil's harsh testimony with Ziba's words of divine hope.

She would tell him at their next meeting all her lover had said, and he should defend himself before she joined in the hastily-uttered criticism. She excused herself early, and eventually fell asleep reading the soothing sentences in a carefully-worded "Mormon Testimony."

Before Basil left, he told Mrs. Abbott that Jacinth's weary expression had quite upset him.

"She looks," he said, "as if she might be suffering from nerves, and I noticed such a strange expression in her eyes which I have only seen once before in any human being. It was when I attended an hypnotic entertainment. I remember so vividly a girl being mesmerized and walking about the room with her eyes wide open, doing whatever the operator commanded. It was horribly uncanny, and I hated the whole affair."

Mrs. Abbott was not frightened by his words; she knew that love occasionally made people over-anxious.

"I know all Jacinth's friends," she replied lightly, "and I am sure there is no hypnotist among them. Personally I don't believe in that kind of influence. Probably the performance you speak of was all a fake."

Nevertheless, Basil left the house unconvinced.

The following day Ziba once more waylaid the daily governess. Almost before he could speak she

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had poured forth the vituperations heaped on his faith by her father and lover. Much to her surprise the Elder received this information calmly. He replied softly, taking both her hands in a firm grip, feeling her pulses beat against his finger tips. He bent over her, so that his face was hardly an inch away from the girl's blushing cheek.

"It is the devil's own work to hinder a celestial revelation. Such scoffers deserve to fall beneath the law of Blood Atonement. If there were no soundness in our faith, would thousands of people leave home, travel to a strange land, and help build up a Mormon colony? Our priests gather souls to Zion, not only from the British Isles, but from Continental countries, whose children know that Utah has been made to blossom as the rose. There, the white-robed saints are separated from godless Babylon. There, the true Gospel in all its purity may be found and enjoyed. If you doubt me and dread to let me address the little society of which you are head, do not tell them I am a Saint. Permit me to meet them on common ground, or as one already condemned. I merely ask for a hearing, allowed even to criminals. If I thought you were indeed prejudiced against me, one of my life's ideals would be shattered. I know that you are different to the daughters of the world. It is possible Heaven may grant me some means of showing you a sign which will convince you of my superior purity

and holiness. The redemption of Zion must needs come by power. I know that I have been raised up like Moses when he led the Children of Israel. I will tell you a secret. I was not always a Mormon. As a mere boy I retired to a secluded thicket, and in deep supplication entreated Heaven to show me the right sect among all religions. While I cried aloud, with hands stretched upwards, the whole wood became illuminated with dazzling light. Enveloped in rays of glory I was caught away in a vision. Two supernatural personages, with the countenance of angels, told me that the Mormon leaders had been chosen to restore the true priesthood upon earth. After that I studied the Book of Mormon, first written upon golden plates, and knew that it contained the fulfilment of the Everlasting Gospel. Since that day I have witnessed in visions a marvellous display of celestial bodies, evil spirits struggling with angels to hinder their work. Finally an archangel and his company captured the chief devils, compelling them to file before me in procession that hereafter I might know them and parry their attacks. This Basil Hope of whom you speak was possibly one of the devils in question. Our Prophets have frequently been the sport of mobs, slanders, and lies."

For the first time he released her hands, and a sense of fanatical ecstasy took possession of Jacinth. She forgot she was late for her Lovesey pupils.

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The whole world contained Ziba, and Ziba alone. "If the others are devils," she gasped, "I, at least, can break away. Teach me how to receive the true spirit of angels, show me how I can be saved."

Ziba had his answer ready—

"If you would know the will of God, it is that you should break your engagement with this heathen blasphemer, Basil Hope. He is a murderer in disguise, for he wishes to kill your soul. He has no chance of future exaltation; it had been better for him if his blood were spilled upon the ground. Light and darkness cannot dwell together. If you would make yourself worthy of becoming a Latter-Day Saint, you must live your religion. I shall pray for the hour when you will be baptized in the right faith; meanwhile, dear Sister, receive my blessing, and the spiritual baptism which I can give you in the kiss of a Saint."

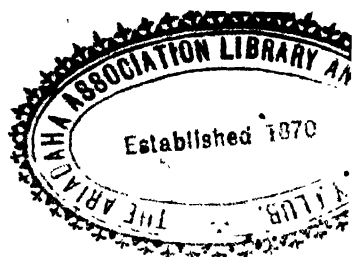
He raised her face, and by some strange magnetism drew her lips to cling to his own, as the bee is fastened to the flower.

Jacinth felt her brain reel, and the April sunlight danced before her eyes like some mystic flame of fire.

To the weak, nerveless girl those fantastic seconds appeared as a lifetime. Then she was conscious of release, he drew her arm through his own, and forced the trembling limbs to walk.

Dazed and bewildered, she arrived at Pool Street half an hour late for the morning study.

Mrs. Lovesey met her in the hall, a tall, gaunt figure, with set lips and folded arms.



CHAPTER III

THE UNCLEAN THING

"I WARNED you that I never speak twice," said Mrs. Lovesey in "freezing accents. "Your engagement here must cease this day week. I am surprised you should dare to offend again after my reprimand of yesterday."

Jacinth's face fell. Until this moment she had not realised that her morning's adventure would cost her the much-needed salary.

"I have not been feeling very well," she gasped, for now her head swam, and her pulses beat painfully.

She feared for the moment she was going to faint, but her pallor had no effect on Mrs. Lovesey's stern criticism.

"The girl is feigning ill-health as an excuse," thought her employer, as she turned away after one last disdainful look at the cowering figure.

With a sensation of mental and physical exhaustion Jacinth mounted to the schoolroom. She found her charges highly delighted at the lateness of the hour.

"You *are* kind," said the youngest child, patting

her hand gratefully. "Our other governess always came before the time."

The irony of the words fell like lead on Jacinth's ear, and as she settled them to their copybooks, one word alone rang in her mind, that epoch-making word, "change."

Her life had fallen beneath this great law of alteration. Her work at the Lovesey's was near its end, and Ziba had pronounced she must break her promise to Basil, since he hindered her faith. No kiss from her lover had ever set upon her soul the burning seal of utter surrender. She knew this stranger had taken some immortal part of herself to imprison as his own property. His claims appeared to her far higher than the claim of man. Ziba had caught his bird, like hundreds of other dupes lured from Europe in the Mormon net. This Elder, with his mesmeric power, had induced girls of respectable parentage to eventually accept as true the literature of Latter-Day Saints which definitely taught polygamy. He never confessed to believing in plural marriages when first approaching a convert. Only later he subtly defended it by quoting Biblical passages, which his victims thought upheld the practice. At his command they ruthlessly snapped all family ties, accepting the loathsome creed pronounced by Mormon apostles that "The law of plural marriage is God-given, and as eternal as any law ever made by the Father."

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Even the children noticed Miss Abbott's abstracted manner. They took advantage of her frame of mind, wriggled from their chairs to the floor, and became utterly unmanageable. Before lunch she was almost reduced to tears in her efforts to make them behave.

She compared this life with the happy existence Ziba described in that far-off country, where emigrants sought the peace and bliss of Zion.

Already she had given him her promise to secretly attend the Mormon services. In her heart she had decided to embrace his religion, if it still appealed to her after further investigation. That evening she would have an opportunity of approaching the girls who met at Briar Cottage. She meant to read them a pamphlet entitled *Latter-Day Glory*. She felt sure she could rouse their curiosity, and make them desire to meet Ziba. Nothing was further from her mind than the fear that he might be a false Prophet in sheep's clothing, a ravening wolf waiting for the young lambs of Christian homes.

But before that pleasant hour with these girls of the people, she must break to her mother Mrs. Love-sey's dismissal. It would be easy to say that her indisposition had given offence. Mrs. Abbott would never dream that a far stronger factor was sapping the truth from Jacinth's hitherto open character. It was the first sin bred by the moral and spiritual enormity, derived from a system of vicious humbug.

Unconsciously this pliable young girl had seen, with hypnotized eyes, a radiant saint in a horrible moral deformity. She little dreamt that, couched in the titles and terms of the true Gospel, an unclean thing had touched her garments. She fancied she breathed the pure atmosphere of Christianity in the degraded Paganism of a revolting system. Its founders' lives, its literature, its present advocates were all stamped by immorality.

Mrs. Lovesey spoke no word to the children's erring governess at lunch. She seemed rather pleased at the fact that the little ones were annoying Miss Abbott by open disobedience. Her manner appeared to say—

"See how you have trained them, it is certainly time a change was made!"

No sign of Ziba brightened her homeward walk. He had told her he would be busy that afternoon with the Church's work. She was to write him fully the result of her first missionary endeavour, posting the letter secretly, for fear lest the devil should find a useful instrument in her opposing parents.

To Jacinth's delight Mrs. Abbott showed little disappointment and no annoyance when told of her daughter's dismissal.

"Don't worry about it, my dear," declared the mother fondly. "I am quite sure that long walk twice daily was too much for you. Doubtless you will find some situation nearer at hand. We must

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not mind about the money, since your future is assured."

Jacinth had not the heart to deal the second blow. She kept her own counsel with regard to Basil.

"No, I won't fret," she promised. "Everything is for the best. You know I now believe so firmly in a Higher Power that I can bear the knocks of the world."

She left her mother wondering, as she went to prepare the parlour for the evening's debate.

The girls arrived punctually, and no sign of fatigue manifested itself now in Jacinth's manner or appearance. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes sparkled, and she greeted her humble friends with an extra show of cordiality. When the door was closed, and they had taken their accustomed seats, Miss Abbott addressed the unsuspecting gathering in a lowered voice.

"All you girls," she said, "love a secret, and so I am going to confide in you a wonderful thing that has happened. To-night we shall lay aside Shakespeare, and study, with your permission, some literature of far deeper importance. A veritable angel has come into my life in the form of a Mormon leader. This saintly man, handsome beyond all belief, tells me that any other Gospel save that of the Latter-Day Saints is accursed. He has had a direct revelation from Heaven, and if you saw him you could not help believing his words. On

every side the devil is hindering the great messages he brings. My father, for one, holds strong opinions about the sect, views which I can hardly call Christian. I have been a different woman since I came into contact with this marvellous being. He calls himself 'Ziba the Revelator,' and though he is like a king, he will stoop to be the friend of us poor girls. He is even interested in you, and suggests meeting our reading circle at some distant spot where beneath God's sky he will expound to us the light that is within him."

A small girl, with very curly red hair and deep-set eyes of bluish-green, looked up with a sly smile.

"I have often talked to the Mormon chaps, miss," she said, "they are rather nice fellows. My big brother won't let me have anything to do with them; he says they have such funny marriage laws."

The other girls were distinctly interested. The interruption of the red-haired speaker gave them the cue to air their views.

"A Mormon lady called at our shop," said Maggie Piper. "She peeped in once or twice and waited till I was alone, before she asked for a packet of hairpins. She said, in a sort of joking way, there were not enough men to go round in England, and it would be a good thing for some of us girls if it were a polygamous country. She does a lot of that house-to-house visiting; there was nothing but good in the tract she left for me, just

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a lot of Scriptural quotations. I know one girl whom she has put into communication with a Mormon at Salt Lake. They regularly correspond, and he wants her to become engaged to him."

Jacinth explained that Ziba was not a polygamist, and her ecstatic description of his charms fired the girls with a keen desire to see this saintly personage.

The heart of youth is prone to accept any new superstition, however unsafe. If Miss Abbott thought it all right, there surely could be no harm in enjoying a novelty. An afternoon was fixed for bicycling into the country, and Ziba had offered to give them all tea at an inn.

Jacinth went to bed very happy. Ziba's hypnotic influence placed within her the same seed of emotional excitement which originally possessed the natives in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Mormonism was born. Like those religious fanatics who rushed into the district between the Allegheny Mountains and Mississippi River, she was ready to accept the wildest improbabilities. Her mind was ripe for an American fantasy, Joseph Smith's alleged discovery of a stone box containing golden plates. It is said these were unearthed in a hill four miles from Palmyra. The box also held a wonderful pair of spectacles, two crystals set in a silver bow, which he called "Urim and Thummin." By aid of these supernatural glasses, Joseph Smith found himself able to translate the mystic writing

on those golden plates, resulting in the "Book of Mormon." When his followers desired to see the plates, he told them the moment the book was finished an angel appeared from Heaven and carried them away.

Jacinth was never a moment without the sense of Ziba's presence guiding her tongue, dogging her footsteps, possessing her body and soul. All his ideas became her own. Round the name of the much-married Joseph Smith she wove a martyr's halo. She little dreamed she was venerating the memory, not only of the pretended discoverer of a new Bible, but of a man whose record held the following disgrace. Few realized in England that he was the cashier of a fraudulent bank, the creator of vastly immoral laws, the poltroon who feared to face in Missouri the arm of justice, and was butchered by an enraged populace for wrong done to another man's wife.

Jacinth rose early to post Ziba a letter, marked "Private and confidential."

"DEAR SAINT (she wrote),—Helped by the Spirit I believe I was enabled to plant some graftings in the unregenerated hearts of my poor little company. The girls are anxious to meet you, and I dream of that hour when, gathered in some solitary field, your voice will fall upon us in blessing, like the voice of Elijah. To-morrow I am to meet my fiancé, and I

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hope to break for ever the tie between us. When one has touched a holy thing, it is impossible to be linked to an unbeliever. You told me before parting that in silent hours I should feel the touch of your lips; you charged me to say if your words came true. Not once or twice, but a thousand times, has that spiritual baptism recurred. My Guide, you are with me always. I am reading the book you gave me on Joseph Smith, since you wish me to venerate the name of your Founder and Prophet. Send me some more literature soon, if I am not asking too much. I shall read nothing else for the present. You spoke of perhaps showing me a sign. If this be possible could you not manifest your greatness also to the girls who, at my instigation, are willing to drink in the heavenly message?

• "Yours, in spiritually humble adoration,

"JACINTH ABBOTT."

Before creeping out to post her letter she locked away the Mormon literature, touching with her lips the volume by the martyred Smith, the world's most sensual impostor, remembered only by reason of vile immorality and perjured plagiarism of Spalding's novel.

Ziba received her letter with a glow of triumph. "She is a dainty morsel," he said, "and I shall take her for myself. Katrine prophesied I should bring yet another wife back with me when I return

to Utah, or perhaps I shall marry her there. It shall depend on the will of the Holy Priesthood. She must first be baptized and received. Now I have hypnotized her, I shall soon force her to understand the law which was given unto Sarah of old. She will see that I am permitted by revelation through the Prophet to have spiritual spouses sealed to myself. Katrine has a great way with girls. She explains to them that as Rachel and Leah gave Bilhah and Zilpah to their husband Jacob, so the Lord desires her to welcome new-comers to my arms. Thus are the Mormon people welded into perfect unity. • Jacinth will be as much my lawful and wedded wife for all eternity, as if she had wasted herself on Basil Hope."

He recalled the soft velvet of her lips, and thought of the delicately flushing cheek.

"She is like a rose to crush," he sighed, "she will warm in the bosom of Mormon faith."

CHAPTER IV

AT THE BIDDING OF ZIBA

WHEN Jacinth had posted that letter she went to her father's room at the usual hour. He greeted her with an extra show of affection, drawing her to him with a cheery smile.

"I am quite of your mother's opinion," he said, "that all is for the best. Your engagement at the Lovesseys' was breaking down your health. This abrupt dismissal is good fortune, in disguise."

He attributed her rather strained look to natural worry at the prospect of finding herself unemployed.

She sat down beside the bed, and her father started at the burning touch of her hand.

"I wonder," said Jacinth with a nervous little cough, "if you would help me out of a difficulty?"

A look of pleasure broke over the sick man's face.

"Need you ask?" he queried, looking proudly at the pretty flushed cheeks of the girl he thought the most beautiful in the world. His love for Jacinth was the one bright spot in his grey life. Her presence in the room brought instant sunshine. Eagerly he awaited her coming, glad that in a week's time she would be free from service.

As she hesitated, he added, with a certain pitiful eagerness—

“Don’t be afraid to ask your old dad any favour, there’s nothing he would not do for you.”

Jacinth took courage. Drawing a deep breath, she spoke to him with eyes averted and fingers nervously interlaced.

“Basil has a holiday to-day,” she began in quick, unsteady accents. “He was coming here this morning, but I wrote last night to postpone his visit till the afternoon. I am going out directly after lunch for a long bicycle ride in the country with the girls who come here to read. I fixed it for to-day, as the Lovesey children have a whole holiday on Saturday, so I thought I should not be tired. I want you to see Basil for me when he calls, and break to him gently that I want to end our engagement. I don’t know how it is, but all my love for him has suddenly died. The very thought of an interview terrifies me. You are so tactful, father. You will explain it is just ‘destiny,’ and he must not mind. He will find a better wife in time; our love story was all a mistake.”

If the stars had fallen from heaven Mr. Abbott could not have been more surprised. For a moment his brain felt so staggered, he half wondered if he were dreaming. Jacinth’s future had appeared so rosy, it seemed impossible to credit she could throw away her happiness thus lightly.

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"My dear child," he gasped, "you surely have not considered what you are doing. It is no small matter to break faith with an honest man unless you have good cause to change. If this hasty decision is the result of some quarrel, let me mediate between you. Basil would never wish to cause you pain. Has he by any thoughtless action shattered the golden thread of your life's romance? The deepest wounds can occasionally be healed by a few words of explanation."

At heart Mr. Abbott was a sentimentalist. The poetical side of his nature had been developed by the daily devouring of the world's greatest writers. He was determined to treat Jacinth's decision merely as a whim, easily overcome by practical argument. To his surprise the girl remained adamant, shaking her head as she answered quickly:

"Basil has done nothing to hurt my feelings. The alteration exists entirely in myself. If I married him now I should sin against my soul. Of course if you would rather not speak, I must face the difficult situation and endure a scene. I had an idea it would be much easier for a man. What do you say? Am I asking too much?"

* A sudden thought came to Mr. Abbott, and grew to strong conviction, as he gazed at his daughter's troubled face. Something was wrong with Jacinth; her mother had hinted at nerves. Surely this was the time to temporize. He must keep the young

people apart, and trust that ere long the girl would return to her rational frame of mind before she lost her lover for ever.

"You are quite right, little one," he murmured tenderly. "It will be easier for me to interview Basil. I will try to put the matter very kindly. Lying here, I have much time for reflection; trust me to plan a suitable scheme of action. A ride in the open air with your young protégées will be a good stimulant on so fine a day. Banish care from your thoughts, and who knows, when you are stronger, the old affection for Basil may revive."

Jacinth, eager to avoid further parleying, thought, instead of uttered, the one word—"Impossible."

Kissing her father, she left him, after whispering a fervent "Thank you."

Fate favoured her afternoon's adventure. Spring smiled, and the birds sang gaily, as if to bless some action of purity and goodness. A missionary spirit descended upon Jacinth. Dismissing all thoughts of Basil, she started off with her little flock, firmly convinced their expedition would be blessed.

The girls had put on their smartest attire, hats trimmed with bright ribbons, and light costumes. One or two were inclined to take the affair seriously, others treated it as a good joke, and whispered irreverent remarks about the Saint when Jacinth was out of earshot.

They found Ziba standing in a grassy hollow,

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apparently wrapped in deep meditation. He did not appear aware of the little company's approach until Jacinth was actually at his side, followed by the girls, who had laid down their bicycles. Then the tall figure turned and fixed a piercing gaze upon his shy visitors.

He extended a hand of welcome to each separately, the mesmeric hand which knew its own power. He murmured a word of greeting in his deep musical voice, and Jacinth noticed a look of surprised admiration pass from one to another, as her young companions came beneath the spell of the Elder's fascination.

"My children," he said, as they stood gathered round him closely together, "you have come at a most propitious moment. This afternoon I can give you a demonstration of power direct from the Most High. Fear not," noting Jacinth's startled look. "There is no cause for alarm."

He paused, drawing their eyes to his strong, intellectual features. His handsome, imposing presence worked an immediate effect, the girls felt embarrassed by his supreme dignity.

Jacinth, the spokeswoman, eagerly asked what his words might mean.

"In yonder field," he replied, pointing to the right, "I happened a few moments since to pass a gipsy encampment. I heard a woman moaning in a caravan, then the frenzied creature rushed out, with tears streaming down her cheeks, and called to one

of the men to go quickly for a doctor. I asked what her trouble might be. She told me her little child of three years old had just died. I entered the poor home upon wheels, and looked upon the lifeless corpse of the gipsy's only son. I was able to speak a word of comfort, telling her that I could deliver the little one from death's dominion if she would but believe in my Apostleship. I charged her to detain the doctor, saying that I wished him to behold the miracle I proposed working in the sight of a godly company of women awaiting me at a not far distant point. If you will follow in my steps we can make our way to the camp of mourning. I shall call upon the Almighty to clothe me with a mantle of strength for the work I hope to perform. Without doubt the answer will come, as in the old Biblical days."

His listeners grew pale, they had not expected this sudden note of tragedy. Some had never seen a dead face, and shrank back at the idea of viewing the gipsy's child. The older ones, however, led them by the hand, with looks and words of encouragement.

Jacinth walked ahead with Ziba.

"Can you do it?" she asked tremulously. "Is it possible you could raise the dead?"

"You will see the mighty works delegated to me by Jehovah," he replied. "Try to realize the startling fact that since I am able to vivify a lifeless lump of clay, I can also with a look or word paralyse my

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enemies, smiting them as Paul smote Elymas, the sorcerer, with blindness. This blessed proof may be specially given to convince you and your company of my spiritual greatness. Then, in all meekness, you will not fear to accept me as your leader, the earthly guardian of your souls."

Jacinth felt her voice fade away as she tried to answer. Already she attributed supernatural power and divine inspiration to Ziba Wayne, convinced he was no ordinary mortal. Secretly she rejoiced that the girls brought by her would undoubtedly be converted if the miracle took place.

As they reached the gipsy caravan, a man with a very professional air was descending the steps. He had evidently heard of Ziba from the child's mother, for he spoke in patronizing and authoritative accents.

"It is no use your attempting to do anything, my good fellow. Life is extinct, and none of your Mormon prayers could bring breath back to that poor little body. You may pray for the child's soul if you like, but I charge you in common decency leave the corpse alone."

Ziba eyed him defiantly.

"Are you a medical man?" he asked.

The stranger handed his card to the self-styled "Apostle."

"With all due respect, Dr. Brown, to your scientific training," declared Ziba bowing, "I intend to

take this affair into my own hands, and trust you will remain to witness the proceedings."

For a moment Dr. Brown appeared inclined to go, then curiosity overcame him, and he took up his post beside the girls.

Ziba addressed the weeping mother solemnly.

"In the name of the Holiest of Holies, I adjure you, woman, to bring forth your dead."

As though forced to obey the commanding voice, the gipsy mounted the steps and reappeared bearing a limp bundle in her arms. The child was wrapped in a sheet, and one cold, white hand fell from the shroud-like covering. Staggering as she moved, the agitated parent regained the plot of ground where her strange visitors stood. A sensation of ghostly terror filled the hearts of those girlish spectators, as they watched the unusual proceedings.

Ziba took the corpse from the mother's arms, and laid it on the ground in the midst of the assembly.

Slowly he unwound the sheet, exposing to view the body of a beautiful little boy, snow-white as a statue, his dark curls brushed off a marble forehead, his pale lips parted in the last death struggle.

Ziba stood over him with hands out-stretched.

"This innocent babe," he cried, "shall be restored to life, if those who witness the miracle of restoration will swear to believe from this day forth in the Mormon faith."

He turned to the girls, avoiding the doctor's eye,

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as if he were a heathen, outside the pale of this saintly bargain.

With all his force of will Ziba was working on the superstitious enthusiasm and mystic passions of youth. Each girlish head bowed assent, while a murmured "Yes" ran from mouth to mouth, like a whispering wind through leaves.

Once again the prophet spoke, this time more loudly.

"Let Life conquer the black enemy Death. Let a soul be snatched from the waiting tomb. The eyes of those who watch shall see the pale corpse wake to view once more God's blessed sunlight. See," bending lower over the child, "colour will soon creep back to the ashen cheek, the limbs at my touch shall quiver."

He passed his hands up and down over the arms and legs of the inanimate child. Now he addressed the mother solely.

"Again you will hear the baby voice calling you by your sacred name. He will run, and laugh, and play as if the dust of the grave had never seared his garments. Hail! I call upon all the heavenly host to grant the prayer of an apostle who supplicates to arrest the mortifying hand of Death. Elijah and Saul of Tarsus were given this same power. Oh! Child, live once more! Nerveless body receive animation. Will those assembled cry aloud, 'Hallelujah!'"

As his listeners obeyed, he bent to the child's mouth, breathing upon his lips, and muttering audibly—

"Come back! Come back! Come back!"

A faint stirring of the muscles sent a gasp of wonder through the eager watching company, now crowding nearer. The child's eyes opened, shut, and opened again.

Then lifting him up with a smile of triumph, Ziba handed the awakened boy to the astonished gipsy woman. The child peeped furtively at the strangers, his mind filled with shy mistrust. Quickly he hid his face on the mother's shoulder, to escape the gaze of those unknown people eyeing him so intently. . .

The doctor came forward, holding his hat in his hand.

"Good heavens! What does it all mean?" he asked. "You must come and see me later, sir. Is it possible there are gods again on the earth?"

Ziba replied he would gladly call at his house and discuss what the medical man pleased to term this "amazing phenomenon."

The joy of the happy mother knew no bounds. Hugging her boy to her bosom, she appeared almost to grudge the kisses showered upon him by Ziba's ecstatic followers.

"She is better left alone," said the man, motioning them away.

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"Follow me back to the adjoining field, and there we can discuss the great goodness of the Almighty, who has shown His sign through me, a pilgrim from the Promised Land."

Quite overcome by the wonder of the proceedings, the girls, who had hardly been able to believe their eyes, walked in the prophet's footsteps with arms linked. Some were trembling so violently they sorely needed the support of their stronger sisters.

Ziba bade them sit down upon the grass and listen, while he spoke. They readily obeyed, for now his words appeared like gold.

"My disciples in grace," he said, "it has been delivered into my hands to show you one of the greatest manifestations possible in these days of unbelief. Were it known that I could raise the dead, I should never have another moment's privacy. In fact, I should be obliged to relinquish my ministry here and return to Zion, that land of peace and happiness which I pray you may some day behold. Fer-
-vently I charge and entreat you to bury what you have seen in your own hearts, and refrain from noising my works abroad, lest I be driven from your midst. I shall call on Dr. Brown, and beseech him likewise to keep his own counsel. The gipsy camp will be moving on shortly. If they speak of the amazing deed, no one will credit the truth of their statements. Heaven gave me a sign that this innocent child might re-enter existence, but it is not the will of the Great

Gleaner that other sheaves He has gathered should return to earth. I fear that a curse may fall upon you should you refuse to obey my command. Tell, certainly, of the power manifested by Mormon leaders throughout the world, but breathe not the word 'miracle.'"

So impressive was his manner that he easily won the desired promise from his adoring worshippers. Having assured himself they would not dare break such a solemn vow of secrecy, he propounded to them in stirring accents the creed of the Latter-Day Saints. In their awed hearts he planted the firm root of budding Mormonism, to which they stood vowed since his emotional bargain.

Weary from a day of active proselytism when he had finished his discourse, Ziba dismissed them for tea, giving Jacinth a liberal supply of money to meet their needs. He excused his presence by declaring he wished to remain in the hollow, quietly viewing the sunset, seeing visions, and dreaming dreams. Alone, he declared, he would talk with God, and give thanks for the wonders of the afternoon.

He permitted each girl in turn to kneel at his feet and kiss his hand before parting. His farewell smile, with its all-embracing tenderness, filled them with a fresh sensation of rapture.

To Jacinth he whispered softly, "Your reward will be great in the kingdom. You have gathered

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grain into the garner, your work shall not be forgotten."

No sooner were his young dupes out of sight than Ziba hurried to the gipsy camp, and signed to the child's mother to join him.

"Here is the remainder of the money," he said, "which I promised to give you when your work was completed. Perhaps you will believe now that there is no danger in mesmerism. You will find the child you allowed me to hypnotize none the worse for his unnatural sleep. My friend who played the part of the doctor certainly arranged the body very realistically. It was part of our bargain that you leave this neighbourhood at once, remember."

The woman nodded assent, smiling as she fingered the welcome bribe.

"We are getting ready to go now, gentleman," she replied, "we'll be off immediately. I ain't no actress, but my word! I was that frightened when I brought Tommy out for fear you'd never get him back, so I was blubbering in real earnest. I wouldn't care to lend him often for a mesmeric display, though my man knew a young fellow who made quite a good thing out of being hypnotized. He was what they call a right subject, but he went dotty in the end."

Ziba waited to see the departure of the caravan, making sure it took the road away from Riverpool, then, joined by Elder Hoge (the pseudo doctor),

the conspirators drove back to the city of Mormon invasion.

"The Lord has prospered us to-day," said Ziba. "You played your part of medical man with amazing finesse, quite an exemplary piece of work. All is fair when labouring for the Gospel : we know this is lawful through the blessed example of the first Joseph Smith. He was fortunately a hypnotizer like myself, and by the same ruse raised a young woman from the dead, and cured the lame, rheumatic, deaf, and short-sighted. My father remembers seeing Smith work his cures, and also affect his enemies with imaginary diseases. Once after a demonstration fighting ensued, and there was a good deal of bone-breaking, but since it was the Lord's work the Mormon Apostles got the best of the reckless mob, who called them blasphemous infidels ! That was the occasion when Smith warned his tormentors he would summon fire down from heaven to devour them, unless they instantly desisted from molesting the Saints. We still carry on the same serious work at this hour. Every day the Mormon ranks increase. One godly man who joined us recently, has left a Church of England wife and her brood to live in Utah with Mormon spouses. He was commanded to do so by Brother Joshua, and since he was wealthy, has substantially helped the cause. He came to believe that the Almighty spoke through our mouths, and wished to be led by

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us, as Moses guided the chosen people to the Land of Promise. It is good to think he abandoned his heathen wife and family to go forth with the Children of Saints."

Elder Hoge nodded his head in silent approbation.

"We have much to our credit," he murmured. "It has always been our creed to fight the devil with his own weapons, and the Lord has prospered us. By the way, you had around you this afternoon a goodly company of young damsels, doubtless delivered into your hands for heavenly purposes. Your skilled teaching will soon lead them to comprehend that women can only be saved through their husbands. When they become the spiritual wives of Mormon brothers they will know the joys of our secret practices, and build up a future generation."

Ziba leant back with a smile of satisfaction.

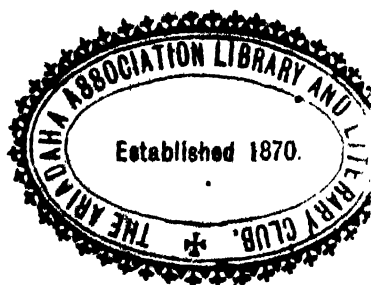
"We shall send a good load of human freight to Utah this year," he said. "Some of our Elders there preach that the girls cannot be saved by young men, they must marry those who are tried in the Kingdom. The more unsophisticated the maidens the better. I fear there is trouble ahead in Riverpool. A fierce spirit is awakening, and we must walk warily, looking for treason against the priesthood. What a godly practice our Church held when men were righteously slain to atone for their sins!"

Orson Hoge drew a deep breath, and the light of war leapt in his narrow eyes. He regarded Ziba

through half-closed lashes, with a scrutiny that could but flatter his companion.

"Two strong men like ourselves," he murmured, "may do much to silence the growing scandal. Though we have no intention of giving up polygamy, since the Mormon Church still holds to the revelation as a Divine command, we can be careful not to prate about it until our converts are safely folded in the elevated sphere of the only true religion. Some brothers call me fanatical, because I believe the day may dawn when through political influence, plural marriages can once more be openly revived."

"The day is far ahead," murmured Ziba sadly.
"The day is far ahead."



CHAPTER V

JILTED

WHEN Basil received Jacinth's letter postponing his visit to Briar Cottage till the afternoon, he crushed his disappointment. Unselfishly he rejoiced in the thought that Jacinth's mother had persuaded her to take a morning's rest. Later in the day her fatigue of the previous evening would have passed, and the pleasure of the afternoon be perfect.

A very light-hearted young man made his way to the Abbotts' home at the appointed hour. He hoped that Jacinth might come a little way to meet him, or be waiting at the gate. From the depths of his nature he thanked God that such love could exist in the human heart, a love to make life beautiful.

His fertile brain busied itself with plans for Jacinth's future happiness. Already he had examined the exterior of suitable houses which might some day welcome a bride and bridegroom to their snug shelter. At night he interestedly wrote out the exact cost of living in the new style necessary to married dignity. Every penny of his income must be stretched to its

furthest limit, if the coming year were to see their happiness fulfilled.

His sense of gratitude for such a treasure had never weakened with familiarity. His idolization of Jacinth stimulated ambition, keeping him always cheerful.

Unknown to the girl, she possessed that mysterious attraction called "human magnetism." She drew from Basil such chivalrous instincts and noble desires, that without an effort she changed him from just an ordinary young man, to a character teeming with inspirational desires.

He was fully aware that he owed to her this swift development.

"She has made a man of me," he told himself. "I might still be a thoughtless boy if love had not lifted me out of the ruck of lazy indifference to my profession."

Perhaps it was Jacinth's father also who helped to train the lover's mind, and expand his intellect. Their quiet talks, which always held an undercurrent of praise for Jacinth, strengthened and finally eradicated Basil's weaker points.

No sign of Jacinth along the road, but his uncritical nature did not censure the omission.

A happiness postponed perhaps was all the sweeter, and the sunshine, dancing before his eyes, appeared to reflect the bright light of joy dwelling within himself.

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To his surprise, the little maid who opened the door conducted him to Mr. Abbott's apartment. He thought, as he passed down the narrow passage, he would rather have met Jacinth alone in the sitting-room, which held such thrilling memories of heart-to-heart talks.

Mr. Abbott was looking strangely pale, and his air of agitation did not escape Basil. Despite the mild spring day, the invalid's hand was deadly cold as he greeted the young man.

"Sit down, my dear boy," he said. "I want a word with you, alone."

Basil's cheek blanched, and a sudden look of fear rose to his startled eyes.

"Nothing wrong with Jacinth?" he gasped, feeling, as he spoke, that after his recent elation he could not endure the suspense should his darling be taken ill.

"Oh! she is better to-day," stammered Mr. Abbott, clearing his throat. "Still, I wanted to discuss her health with you, knowing how very reasonable you are, and how good you have always been to my little girl."

"Oh! it isn't goodness," said Basil with fervour. "When one loves, anything done for the loved one becomes self-gratification. There is nothing in the world I would not suffer for Jacinth's sake."

The words gave Mr. Abbott his opening.

"I am afraid you will have to suffer now," he

answered, avoiding the troubled eyes turned to him in questioning wonder. "There is certainly something wrong with our Jacinth. It puzzles her mother and me sorely. It is bound to come as a shock to you, who have always made her your first consideration. I hardly know how to say what is in my mind. Jacinth has placed on my shoulders a heavy task, one which can only be lightened by my strong suspicion that it arises from temporary nerve trouble. Quite unaccountably she fears her love for you is not strong enough to launch her on the responsible seas of matrimony. For a time it would be wise to release her from the engagement, since the thought of it weighs on her mind, and might retard recovery. Perhaps, if we can manage to send her away for a long change, she may return absolutely her old self. If you will join with us in our efforts to combat this strange mental phase by leaving her entirely alone and feigning to easily accept dismissal, I prophesy the day will soon dawn when Jacinth regrets such a hasty decision. Her *cong  * from the Lovesceys' is undoubtedly due to some change in herself. She was not able to fulfil her duties there, and, through ill-health, displeased her exacting employer. I think you realize the blow it would be to me if I honestly feared you were not to become my son-in-law. Let us try to bear with this present frailty, and instead of despairing, put our heads together to find the best way out of a difficulty."

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As Mr. Abbott's words fell slowly on Basil's astonished ears, a thousand tumultuous sensations made those few moments appear an eternity to Jacinth's lover. Since her warm acceptance of him he had never contemplated any change. Jacinth had few men friends, and was so taken up with her teaching, that the fear of rivalry was non-existent. When her lips gave their promise, those truthful eyes proved witnesses to the vow of constancy. Though he was the most demonstrative, he attributed her quiet manner to youthful reticence, dwelling on the coming days when, as a bride, he would draw forth the full reciprocity of her nature. Now he fancied a black cloud descended in the room, hitherto made bright by open windows and pale papering.

He tried to speak, but his breath went from him, as if the very sap of his life were ebbing away, at even the hint of losing Jacinth. Without her he knew well enough he was a doomed man. His love was so part of his existence that, robbed of it, the world held nothing. Ambition died, all interests shrivelled away; he would be a body without a soul, a ghost in the universe of men. He could not explain to the helpless invalid the full force of misery sweeping over his mind.

Mr. Abbott waited tactfully in silence. He understood that inward battle, sympathetically picturing himself in Basil's place. What if Jacinth's love for her father were on the wane; how would he

feel then? He knew the supposition to be impossible, since a daughter's love was grounded in different soil. Jacinth's duty to a suffering parent held none of the fear associated in some minds with marriage and its responsibilities.

Basil felt the thin hand laid tenderly on his arm; turning, he gripped the fingers extended to him in sympathy.

"If I thought," he stammered, "this were really my dismissal, I doubt if I could bear the burden of my life. I suppose I should go on somehow, as other disappointed men have done, but I could never hope to rise above my sorrow." You know what she is to me—you love her too."

Basil battled with his self-command. To break down in the presence of one whose days were stamped by physical infirmity would indeed be cowardly. Through his own pain he remembered what those words must have cost Mr. Abbott. Jacinth was evidently afraid to speak them herself, she had hidden away, leaving the burden on her sick father's shoulders. This proved that alteration had laid its marring hand on Hugh Abbott's daughter. Were she herself, the cruel request could not have entered her mind. So often she told Basil in the past, of her daily effort to try and lighten the invalid's burden. Her consideration for both parents had always appealed strongly to Basil.

Forcibly he pulled himself together, resolving

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to profit by her example in those dear remembered days.

"You are right," he said, "we must look upon this as illness, taking all circumstances into consideration. I noticed she looked unwell, her mother also knew something was wrong. What can we do for her health? You know any money I have saved is at your disposal."

Mr. Abbott looked touched by the characteristically generous suggestion.

"My dear fellow," he replied, "your money must be saved for the home which I still believe Jacinth will grace. The only doctors I have much faith in at present, are time and rest. Our medical men have not yet mastered that intricate malady, nerves. If they had, I believe they could show me how to use again this poor nerveless spine. Of course, if we see no change in Jacinth during the next week or two, we must consult some authority. Give Nature a chance first. Jacinth is bound to miss you, and if you will take an older man's advice, refrain from writing her a single word. Nothing piques a woman like indifference. If she thinks you do not care, and suspects you may possibly be interesting yourself in other girls, the old sentiments may more speedily revive. She said the change was in herself, and that you had done nothing to warrant such treatment at her hands."

Basil was thinking hard. Every imaginable

possibility passed through his brain with amazing swiftness. Each little thread of conversation spoken during his last visit returned like portions of a puzzle. He recalled Mrs. Abbott mentioning a Mormon tract dropped by Jacinth in her father's room. What if those slimy serpents had dared to approach the citadel of innocence, breathing corruption into the heart of his beloved?

"I wonder," he said, "whether some influence, unknown to us, can possibly be at work. I hardly like to insult Jacinth by even a momentary thought. Still, in a case of emergency, one must dive deeply into the foundations of disaster."

A look of curiosity passed over Mr. Abbott's face. He could not guess the meaning of Basil's words.

"Speak out all your thoughts," he murmured encouragingly, "nothing you could say will offend me."

"I was thinking of these crowds of Mormons in Riverpool," said the young man feverishly; "suddenly there is an outcry in the press that their work in our midst is more deadly than we suppose. Their chief prey appears to be women and girls, who fall beneath insidious teaching. Their agents are working to sap the sanctity of home life, and breed in the souls of the young, moral, physical, and social ruin. Many victims are entrapped in the meshes, since we know thousands of European converts are

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lured to Utah. Once there, disgraced, ashamed, and deluded, they dare not return to the old country. Only the other evening I met a delegate from America who has lectured in England warning our people against Mormon machinations. His object, in coming was to stir up the British Government to exclude visiting Mormon elders from this country. He himself was born in the Mormon religion, reared in polygamy in Utah, and rescued by the Christian Church. He opened my eyes to the existing danger, though I little dreamt I could ever suspect one I loved of listening to such people. Is it not true that Jacinth dropped a Mormon tract in your room, and does not the dropping of it coincide with her sudden attack of nerves ? " " "

For a moment indignation welled up in the father's heart, that any living soul could imagine his child capable of such weakness. Then, as he paused, anxious to speak no hasty word, an icy chill of apprehension ran through his veins.

A parish magazine lay on his bed. He had not yet digested its contents, but previously noticed it held a lecture on Mormonism. The editor had headed the page with a text from Titus : " Teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake."

" I can hardly believe," declared Mr. Abbott nervously, " that our women here in England would be deluded by such impostors. Still, just in case

Jacinth has heard anything fascinating about their doctrine, I will make a point of opening her eyes to-night. It is probably quite unnecessary, but let us be on the safe side. Even if these Mormons still secretly practise polygamy, it puzzles me why they send shiploads of women to Utah from all parts of the world. They must by now have a sufficiency of plural wives."

"That was explained," said Basil, "by the lecturer telling me all polygamists would be annihilated, unless they controlled the laws and courts of Utah. Women have votes there, and to obtain the women's vote these sly Mormon men marry the fresh arrivals. Even if a woman cannot speak a word of their language, as a wife of an American citizen her vote is assured. The wives work for them in the fields, and the whole scheme is one for enriching the present Joseph Smith and a set of wealthy elders, who grind down their weaker brethren, fattening on their slender means. It would have made your blood boil to hear my informant talk."

Mr. Abbott declared it was a terrible scandal, but in no way connected the danger with Jacinth. He was not altogether sorry when Basil rose to go, since the strain of the interview told on his wasted frame.

Jacinth's mother, who had kept out of the way on Basil's arrival, now greeted him with a troubled

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look as he emerged, pale and shaken, from Mr. Abbott's room. She beckoned him into the parlour of memories, and he could see from her eyes she had been crying.

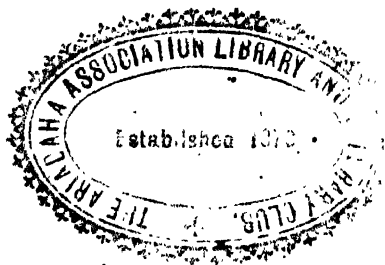
"Hugh does not believe in any of this at all," she whispered. "He will not admit that Jacinth has jilted you. I am so afraid of upsetting him that I try to conceal her strange ways. You know what you said about being mesmerized. Well, I laughed at the time, but I have thought of your words since, and I believe there is something in the suggestion. Jacinth moves about like one in a dream. She seems to be another person. I have been making some inquiries, and the postman told a friend of ours that he had seen Jacinth walking with rather a strange-looking man who appeared to be talking earnestly. I asked her what it meant, and she said there must be some mistake. Of course I ought not to disbelieve her, since she has always been so truthful; in fact, I have never known her even to exaggerate. I am thankful this afternoon she is not out alone. With her usual kindness she has taken her little reading class for a bicycle run into the country."

Mrs. Abbott was struck as she spoke by the expression of dumb misery on the young man's face.

"If I thought there was any sorcery going on," he said, "I'd never rest till I found the fellow and gave him his deserts. I suppose I must not come here

again until Jacinth reconsiders her bitter decision. Let me implore you to keep a sharp eye on her, and communicate with me if you want help. Certainly guard your husband as far as possible from worry or annoyance. The canker of care is bad enough for us strong ones, but to an invalid it assumes more gigantic proportions. Believe me, I have not accepted my *congé*. I should indeed be poor spirited if I did not fight for a prize so well worth winning. Whatever happens, I shall love her to my dying hour. Separation will make no difference. In my eyes she will remain perfect. We must all three guard her, Mrs. Abbott. I mean to keep very wide awake."

Already a resolve had formed in his mind. He would immediately seek out a first-rate detective and employ him to watch Jacinth's movements. If any foul play were on foot, he, Basil Hope, would mark down the conspirator, and spend his last farthing in bringing him to justice. .



CHAPTER VI

THE FOOLISH MANY

WHEN Jacinth returned from her afternoon's ride her mother noticed an unmistakable look of ecstasy on the girl's face. Since the raising of the dead, Ziba had become to her more than a pastor and guide. He was an angel walking the earth, a miraculous being sent to waft her thoughts to Heaven. The little home and its inmates mattered nothing, since she had communed with divinity, witnessing the power revealed by Ziba as a convincing sign of his God-bestowed gifts. She forgot the interview was to take place between her father and Basil Hope, making no mention of it as she entered Mr. Abbott's room.

"I have had a glorious ride," she said, her face still brightened by a smile of wonder. "Oh, father, how I wish you could have been with us!"

As the man watched her glowing cheeks a sense of relief calmed his troubled brain. She looked so fresh, innocent, and happy, he already hoped she was on the road to swift recovery. Seldom had he thought her so radiantly beautiful, and his heart ached for Basil.

"The poor boy has gone away resolved to leave you entirely to your own devices," said Mr. Abbott, recalling his own counsel of the afternoon. "Doubtless Basil will soon console himself; for a young man with such good prospects will be looked on as a catch. Marriage is not so easy nowadays unless a girl has money. I made your wishes quite clear, and found it a most unpleasant task."

Jacinth pressed a grateful kiss on her father's forehead.

"How dear and good of you!" she murmured. "It is so delightful to be free."

Mr. Abbott made no answer. He closed his eyes to conceal a look of disappointment: he had hoped for a very different reply.

"Shall I read to you, father?" asked the girl, noting his pallor, and wondering if he were in pain.

"Yes," he answered quickly. "Read me the first article in that magazine, the one about Mormonism."

Jacinth trembled as she took up the periodical, quickly observing that the chronicled lecture was an attack on Ziba's faith.

"I think, if you don't mind," she murmured, "I will read something else. I hardly like the look of this article."

Mr. Abbott's heart beat faster. He snatched the paper from her hand, eyeing her critically.

"What is the meaning of your prejudice?" he

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demanded. "Is it possible you favour a community notoriously immoral? It almost makes me think these preaching Elders have got hold of you, and stuffed your head with their misleading literature."

As he spoke the words of censure, Jacinth pictured that dead child lying on the grass. She could hear again Ziba's cry to God, and feel the thrill of that unexpected awakening. After such an experience, nothing her father could say would dispel the sense of awe and reverence with which she regarded the saintly Apostle.

"You don't answer," continued Hugh Abbott hotly. "If it were all as innocent as they would have us believe, why are Mormon Elders excluded from Germany? They can no longer trade there in human flesh and misery."

A little shiver passed over Jacinth.

"You know nothing about them," she said defiantly. "The Press love to stir up some excitement. Polygamy has long since been abandoned."

"That is your idea," cried Mr. Abbott, referring to the lecture by the official delegate from America. "Some one has come to open our eyes, and show his audience an affidavit made by a woman who was induced to listen to the representations of Mormon agents. She went to Utah, believing that prosperity awaited her there. Finding she had been misled, and having no money with which to return home,

she was offered marriage by one of those so-called saints, although she was a married woman and he had another wife. He told her that the baptism she underwent when she became a Mormon, was a release from all former marital vows. The speaker declares that polygamy to-day is rampant in Salt Lake City. He came to our town to demand suppression of this immoral traffic because he believed Riverpool to be the European headquarters of Mormonism. He alluded to a recent illustration in our midst of its debasing doctrines, and their pernicious influence on the young and attractive womanhood of our city. Listen" (reading the printed lines): "'The Mormon Church does not prohibit polygamy, but commands it. The lecturer placed before them the undeniable evidence of Congressional documents, and of sworn testimonies in the presence of American clergymen. They witnessed the immoralities practised by the Mormon priesthood to which the elders who teach in the streets of Riverpool belong. The present head of Mormonism, Joseph F. Smith, reaps a good salary, which lies at the base of the entire system, the exploitation of the foolish many to enrich the cunning few. They cannot tell how the money goes, since no financial balance is struck, but his salary is said to be £400,000 a year. The majority of young women who are led away to Utah believe they will marry respectably, and live as some Mormon's only wife. To illustrate

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what really happens, the lecturer quoted from an elder, who testified to the committee as follows :—

“ ‘Where were you married to your third wife ? ’
‘ In Salt Lake City. There were no witnesses present.’

“ ‘Did none of your wives know where you had married the other one ? ’ ‘No, they were not present.’

“ ‘But did either of them know you were marrying the others ? ’ ‘Not at the time.’

“ ‘When did each of them first learn that she was not the only wife, but that you had three wives ? ’
‘ Two or three years after, I believe.’

“So that polygamy is not voluntarily entered into by many of these girl dupes of Mormon missionaries ; they are tricked into marriage by elders, in the belief that each is the sole and legal wife.

“ ‘Moreover, plural wives are led to believe that lies, intended to conceal their immoralities, will elevate and glorify them in the sight of God.’

Mr. Abbott paused that Jacinth might fully digest what he had read. Inwardly she was saying to herself—

“If these things were true, if Ziba were not divine, he would never have been allowed the supreme power of Godhead. One who could recall life to a body proclaimed dead by medical evidence cannot be sin-defiled. He said the devil worked against him. I must combat the devil now;”

"Have you anything more to accuse them of, father?" she asked coldly.

"The figures are pretty damning," continued Mr. Abbott. "Two hundred and twenty men have recently adopted polygamy, and the lecturer can give their names if desired. A statement appears in a Mormon compendium to this effect:—

"If plural marriage is unlawful, then is the whole plan of salvation throughout the House of Israel a failure, and the entire fabric of Christianity without foundation."

"They say they did not reveal celestial marriage, and so cannot withdraw or renounce it. God revealed the doctrine, and has promised to bless those who obey the law. By this creed no man who has only one wife can go to heaven; he must have more than one, if he is to be saved hereafter."

Jacinth sprang to her feet.

"I have heard quite enough," she burst out. "In all religions there are good and bad. I want to look for the good in everything. If I am interested in Mormonism, it is because it has come to me in its best and purest form. A Gospel undefiled, blest by direct guidance from heaven; anything which helps us upwards cannot be wicked, and as you would have me believe, a scandalous imposture. May not this anti-Mormon crusade be the special work of Satan to prevent souls ripe for salvation from falling under the spell? Men who preach

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good Bible doctrine are not surely ravening wolves, thirsting for the bodies and souls of the innocent."

In a moment Jacinth stood revealed to her now horrified and convinced parent. She was defending these roving aliens and their dupes, ignoring all evidence from respectable citizens. The agony of the thought momentarily paralysed Mr. Abbott. Never since the first days of bitter realization when he knew he might not walk again, had his infirmity so tantalized and tormented him. He felt like a log of flesh chained in a prison, while one he loved roved in dangerous paths. His adoration of Jacinth was so great that, even now, his ideal was not shattered. In his eyes she was still a child, one to be guarded, and rescued from youthful follies. Trying to control his fury, he spoke to her calmly.

"I had no idea," he said, "you had been thinking seriously about this, so-called, religion. I shall not have much difficulty in opening your eyes to the truth. Our vicar is one of the greatest opponents to Mormonism in this city. His own communicants have been lured away, and the cases in point are public property. I shall ask him, as a favour, to tell you all he knows against Mormonism. The elders recently placed in the hands of two young girls, members of his congregation, a book of *References*, in which nearly a dozen pages were entirely devoted to teaching polygamy in the plainest language, actually claiming that it was practised by

some of our Lord's disciples. Those who are afraid to advocate its principles cannot be Latter-Day Saints according to their teaching. All sincere Mormons, therefore, are law breakers, since they defy the Government marriage restriction, and the manifesto which was supposed to abolish polygamy. When you know that I am speaking the truth, you cannot refuse to give me your word never to read again a Mormon tract. I hardly think you can have talked to any of the elders. As to attending their meetings, if you were seen there, you would be done for in Liverpool."

Jacinth moved to the foot of the bed, and stood there gazing at her father. Her eyes were ablaze with strange fire, her lips trembled as she reared her head disdainfully.

"We are never likely to agree," she declared, "so it would be wiser to bury the subject for ever; that is, if you care to see me in your room. Had you spoken more kindly, I would tell you all I know of a saintly man who has planted in my heart the seed of eternal life. The parents who brought me into this world should rejoice that their child, who held religion lightly, has been so suddenly converted. Nothing you could say will make any difference. That is the one thing each spirit must judge for itself. I found it very difficult not to lose my temper this evening, only a new influence has helped me to master the anger I felt while you read those libellous

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pages. Perhaps if we cannot agree it would be better for me to go away. I could take a situation as resident governess, possibly I might obtain some post abroad."

Stunned as he was by the numbing revelation, Mr. Abbott's thoughts travelled quickly. Under the tragic circumstances Jacinth must be immediately removed from Riverpool and its temptations. Why not endeavour to procure her a place as English governess in Germany, the country which Mormon teachers may not enter?

"You are right," he said, "it is time to make a change. Your mother and I will communicate with some good agency or advertise in a suitable paper."

In his heart Mr. Abbott blessed the German Government for its strong action in forbidding the presence of those polygamous missionaries.

Jacinth heard her mother's approaching steps, and hastily left the room, feeling unable to face the wrath of both parents together.

Mrs. Abbott found her husband in a state of serious collapse. It was some moments before he could gasp out the terrible truth.

"Our child," he said, "has been caught in the trap. She has openly confessed her attraction to the insidious teachings of Mormonism. It has lately come to light that these proselytizing elders must use all their efforts to get converts out to Utah. If

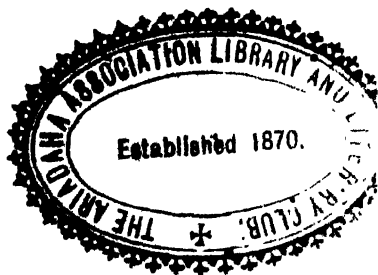
they fail to take at least nine emigrants, each must pay more for his return passage. There is absolutely no modification of this rule. It is a soul-destroying curse, and its foul tentacles have touched our girl. The news has come to me as a sickening and heart-rending sorrow. If Jacinth were entrapped and led to Utah by these people, not only would our home be ruined, but it would mean my death."

He fell back on his pillow, livid to the lips, as faintness stole over him.

Mrs. Abbott called loudly for Jacinth.

"Go quickly for a doctor," she cried as the girl appeared, "your father is taken ill."

Jacinth ran hatless out of the house to obey the injunction. "Oh! if Ziba could come!" she thought feverishly, "and say to my father, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'"



CHAPTER VII

HIS MILLENNIAL STAR

JACINTH'S mind was full of Ziba as she ran in search of the doctor. Fortunately he was at home, and hurried to Briar Cottage, not noticing Miss Abbott failed to follow. Silently she stood in the road, pondering her next movements. Ziba would be back in Riverpool by now, and she had the address of his rooms. Dare she go and intercede with him for her sick father who had abused the Mormon faith? If Ziba could raise the dead, surely he might restore power to Hugh Abbott's limbs. Even now, her father was possibly in a serious condition. She had never known him faint before. How glorious if he could be converted by witnessing the healing strength of Ziba's ministry!

Already it was dusk, and Jacinth was uncertain of her way, since the saint lived in an obscure part of the city.

Just as she hesitated, undecided as to her course of action, an empty cab came slowly by, returning to town. It seemed like guidance, and instinctively she ran forward, making a sign to the driver. He

looked surprised when this hatless young woman asked him what he would charge to Preston Villas. The amount was not great, and Jacinth sprang into the shabby conveyance, every nerve tingling with the wild excitement of this unexpected adventure.

There could be no harm, since she went to plead with a man of God for her father's physical health and moral salvation.

She knew well enough it was unconventional to call, minus a chaperone, at Ziba's private apartments. She felt convinced, however, he would instantly understand her motive, and welcome this sign of confidence in his shivalry. She told herself fervently he must not be ranked with other men. He was on a pedestal, high above mortals whose thoughts were evil. Though she felt her father hardly deserved the trouble she was taking on his behalf, she remembered the Bible teaching, that those who are spitefully used must return good for evil.

Ziba had just arrived at his house with Elder Hoge; they lodged together, and shared a sitting-room.

The two men were enjoying a late tea, when the landlady ushered in Miss Abbott.

Jacinth's manner showed confusion as Ziba rose with rather a startled look, glancing nervously from his unexpected visitor to Orson Hoge.

The actor of the afternoon was equal to the occa-

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sion. Quickly he furnished a ready explanation of his presence.

"You will see, my dear young lady," he said, "in spite of my many professional engagements, I found time to seek out the miracle worker of to-day. He can furnish me with no scientific explanation of the marvellous deed we witnessed when he called back that child spirit. I, like yourself, have been suddenly converted to Mormonism by this startling evidence of a deed far exceeding any words. Doubtless you wish to consult our friend on some matter of importance, so I will now withdraw, as I have patients waiting for my ministrations."

Bowing to Jacinth, the pseudo-doctor left the room, after wringing Ziba heartily by the hand.

Elder Wayne breathed more freely. Just for a moment he had feared his trick might be suspected by this fair dupe.

"What can I do for you, my child?" he asked, drawing her to the fire place that their figures might not be observed from neighbouring houses at the window. "I see you are agitated. Tell me all your trouble, and I will carry your burden, even as the shepherd bears the young lambs in loving arms."

His benevolent manner gave Jacinth courage. She no longer trembled at the thought of her intrusion.

"I have had a most terrible scene with my father,"

she gasped. " Though I never mentioned my new-found happiness, for some unaccountable reason he began railing against your faith. I bore it as long as I could, then I boldly stood up for Mormonism."

Ziba's lips hardened, an expression of annoyance crept over his face.

" You should have held your peace, sister," he murmured, " until you were baptized into the fold. You have now made it more difficult for me to snatch you from an ungodly household. Your parents will try to detain you, and watch your movements. It will probably mean an open fight, but for the Gospel's sake you must defy all opposition,"

Jacinth's cheeks flushed.

" Indeed ! " she replied, " I am prepared for every emergency, but, if you will, you can make the path smooth. My father has just been seized with a fainting attack, and, as you know, suffers from a permanent infirmity. I have come to beg you to return with me to Briar Cottage and heal your enemy, thus redeeming his soul as well as his body. You can do it if you will."

She clasped her hands entreatingly, and drawing nearer, looked up into Ziba's face with large expressive eyes of eager pleading.

The apostle thought he had never seen a face so winningly attractive. It appealed to the passionate side of his sensual nature with a force which

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astonished one so satiated by feminine charms. He felt his brain grow dizzy with desire, as he returned the earnest gaze of the girl he had so easily hypnotized.

"Come and sit here, my beloved in the Lord," he whispered tenderly, putting his arm about her shoulder.

He drew her to a couch, placing her so near him that he could feel the supple pressure of her form. Then he spoke in low, melodious tones, his breath playing on her cheek.

"You do not mean to sin," he said, "when you ask this favour at my hands. Nevertheless you have unconsciously committed a very grave fault. You ask me to set foot in an infidel household, and work a miracle upon one who has brought the wrath of God on his own offending head. This fresh attack of illness was a direct judgment from heaven to punish a blasphemer. The Almighty permitted me to restore an innocent child who had never wittingly transgressed. If I sought to work the same blessing on one accursed, I should bring damnation upon myself. We are not allowed to succour brethren who have committed sins we hold to be worthy of death. Your father must live out his wretched existence, since your laws do not allow the saving of souls through the shedding of blood. We believe that such transgressors might have a chance in eternity if their blood could be spilled on the ground

as a smoking incense to the Almighty. Instead this stiff-necked parent of yours must remain a covenant-breaker, one of the devil's angels of darkness. In due time the sword of the Most High will be unsheathed to hew down the miserable sinner. Meanwhile you, my beautiful child, will have reached the circle of gods and goddesses. I speak with assurance, because we Mormons can beat the world at any game, since we represent the holy priesthood, and have been entrusted with the keys of the heavenly kingdom."

As Ziba spoke it was not his words, so terrifying and bloodthirsty, that worked an effect on Jacinth's mind. She was gradually being re-hypnotized, completely entranced by the fixed gaze of those fiery eyes. The sensation dazed her brain and she fancied the room filled gradually with strange mediumistic vapours. She was not alone with Ziba, there were angels and archangels thronging the apartment. He held both her hands firmly, yet she was barely conscious of the touch. She fancied her spirit was elevated, and, leaving her body, floated high above the narrow window frame. She answered Ziba in brief affirmatives, scarcely aware that her lips moved.

"Your people are not for God," he continued, and now his voice sounded as a judge condemning the unworthy. "They will be hewn in pieces. The time approaches when justice will be laid to

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the line, and righteousness to the plummet. I shall witness that destruction, since death will never have dominion over me, and the Lord has promised to assist me in every good work."

In her right mind Jacinth would have shuddered at the curse to fall on her parents. Now, those parents no longer existed in her life's scheme. She was another being, snatched away from them by mesmeric trickery. She even forgot she had come to plead for her father's health.

"Little one," he whispered, "I must rescue you from surroundings unworthy of your spiritual nature. Come with me to a land of prosperity. Let my love enfold you, be my wife. You shall see the beautiful River Jordan flowing through the rich valley of the Salt and Utah Lakes, a veritable land of milk and honey. In your naked country, you cannot conceive the magic rapidity with which our vegetation flourishes in the now firmly-established Zion. Mother Earth gives forth to man the staff of life with lavish hands. In Utah you will be rich, you will share the joy of spiritual wives. Through marrying me, you will be saved from the damnation awaiting you, should you die in the name of Jacinth Abbott. In Utah your soul can be snatched from pending ruin, if you obey my commands implicitly. Repeat these words slowly after me: 'Ziba's will be done, not mine. To gain my crown of Eternal Life I must completely gratify his devout desires,

and follow unerringly in the steps of the prophet and his devotees.' "

It was not Jacinth's voice which echoed the words, but the voice of some sub-conscious being, forced into existence by the powerful hypnotist. They were spoken with elation. A great flood of joy passed over the girl, as he gathered her closer, raining kisses on her lips, neck, eyes and hair. She was past seeing through his blasphemous words, or recognizing the licentiousness hidden behind the term "spiritual wives."

Forced by his magnetism, she was giving back kiss for kiss.

"My mate for time and eternity," he cooed, crushing her closer, till she panted for breath. "The sealing ordinance shall take place directly you are baptised. You will be mine in the new and everlasting covenant, wedded in the presence of God and angels, a veritable celestial marriage. Understand, Jacinth, there is no provision made for women in the Scriptures, their only chance of heaven is to be sealed to an Elder of our Church, to reign for ever as a star in his crown. I have many truths to teach you. God told the first Joseph Smith, in direct revelation, that numberless spirits were waiting to be born into this world before their exaltation in the next. Until these wraiths have entered tabernacles of clay, the millennium cannot come. The All-merciful Father has provided a way by which

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they may honourably find existence, the Elders in Israel shall seal up virtuous women, who will bring forth these spirits in natural birth."

Ziba was eager to plant all the seeds of his faith in her mind while the controlled brain was absolutely under his power. He knew she was bound, for the moment, to accept any statement, since she had no will of her own. He felt half inclined to now testify to the truthfulness and divinity of plural marriage, trusting it might abide in her when she returned to a normal condition. He refrained, however, preferring to remain on the side of caution.

"The time is not ripe," he told himself warily. "The principles and doctrines by which the Old Testament fathers were justified shall be revealed to this child later. What was accounted to Abraham for righteousness, stands good with present-day Apostles. My other wives shall keep their identity secret, until Jacinth has received the revelation of polygamy."

The girl lay with her head on his shoulder, her lips smiling, and her eyes glazed, as they stared into the face of this mud-besmirched Saint.

"You love me," he said, not asking a question, but stating a fact. "You were sent to earth for this hour.. It behoves us to create as little stir as possible, lest the devil's agents tear from you this divinely revealed creed. You will marry me under the direct command of Deity, but for the sake of Mormonism it

would be wiser not to openly defy parental authority. I will steal you away in romantic fashion. Have you any suggestion to make about departure? "

Ziba released the fettered brain, once again permitting it full play.

Jacinth felt her intellect sharpened by recent contact with Ziba's infectious cunning.

"I have spoken of going abroad," she gasped. "My parents may be seeking a situation for me out of England. Can we not turn this to account that is, if you really love me, and suggest marriage? "

Ziba showed satisfaction at the bright idea.

"My sister is in London," he told her, "and could answer any inquiries made by your parents. She has a great way with her, and would represent a lady engaging you as a governess. Thus it will all be clear sailing. You would leave in peace and comfort, without the demoralizing influence of heated words or evil feeling. When eventually the truth is discovered, you will be a married woman in Utah, far away from the insults of your heathen parents. I must think this matter out, and will meet you on your way to the Lovesseys during these final days of your engagement there. In the meanwhile live in the light of love, and dream glorious dreams of our honeymoon in Zion. Remember I love you alone. You have worked your way into my heart. You are my millennial star. I will crown you with

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rapturous joys, you shall be wife of a Saint, the partner of a god."

He led her to the door, and with a last passionate embrace bade her begone.

"She is safer out of my sight at present," he murmured, when once more alone. "Her external fascinations have set my brain awirl, she is fairer by far than any of my previous wives. No such gem has yet been given into my keeping. I feel like the sons of righteousness, the Sethites, who saw the daughters of the Cainites were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose. These men walked in the laws of Gbd; thus we, their descendants, see no sin in the so-called crime of polygamy."



CHAPTER VIII

JACINTH'S NEW EMPLOYER

FOR once Ziba Wayne had not judged human nature with his usual skilful cunning, when he expected Jacinth's "reading girls" to hold their peace after witnessing his startling manifestation. These young people did not straightway make known in their homes they had fallen under the influence of a Mormon leader, fearing the censure of parents or guardians. But they whispered the weird happenings to close friends and confidants, who passed on the sensational news to other acquaintances. Many disbelieved those whose eyes had seen and whose ears had heard, yet others began to seriously consider Mormonism, and attend meetings out of growing curiosity. Each hoped they might have a chance of seeing miracles worked in their midst. A circle of spiritualists got wind of the affair, and were eager to find the child who had been called back from "the other side." Needless to say, the gipsy and her offspring had vanished into the shadowy distances beyond Liverpool.

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Ziba had procured from Jacinth the names and addresses of those young women who had come beneath the spell of his wonder-work. He arranged for visiting elders to waylay them all in turn, and supply them with Mormon literature, saying they were bound to accept the faith, since that miracle succeeded through their promise to do so. Should they draw back now, God's curse would surely fall upon them, making them liars to Him.

Of course, before long those in authority became aware that the youthful converts were favouring Mormonism; then trouble began.

The excuse came easily to their lips: "Miss Abbott led us into it. We thought it must be all right, because she said so."

For some days Mr. Abbott remained seriously ill, with high temperature and continual headache. The doctor proclaimed him suffering from shock; the weak, nervous system had endured a stunning blow. His wife was almost beside herself with anxiety, frequently reproaching Jacinth with the fact that this was her work. In the midst of the worries besetting this divided household, when Mrs. Abbott looked for sympathy, she received, instead, infuriated letters from the parents of Jacinth's protégées.

One was peculiarly offensive, which came from Maggie Piper's great-aunt.

"I have heard (it ran) of your Mormon daughter's

vile behaviour. If I had my way, she should be in prison. She traded on her birth and learning to defile young women of our class, and lure them away from Christianity. I am fortunately the possessor of a good education, and have read about this body of hypocrites and perjurers. Mormonism is a prolific mother of crime, and if I can save my niece from joining this shocking sect I shall spend the money I was going to leave Maggie in doing so. If she ever speaks to your girl again, I shall send the police to Briar Cottage. It is a disgrace to this country that people should be allowed, in the name of religion, to destroy the morality of private life and force their gross creed on the young and innocent by pretending to be the mouthpiece of God. I had an elder at my door one day, and he left a tract which said that every good Mormon must obey the priesthood in all things, temporal and spiritual. My pastor tells me it is thus they enslave the weak-minded, and get money for their own support out of the dupes they lead astray. I am thankful to see our good Bishop here is taking up this crying evil, and, with the aid of his clergy, exposing the humbug. Now I have had my say, allow me to remain, yours indignantly,

"ARABELLA PIPER."

"PS.—Why not put your daughter into a lunatic asylum for the time? She would then be kept from ruining decent folk."

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This letter, religiously kept from Hugh Abbott's eyes, crushed the already distracted mother with its home truths. She flung it at Jacinth, bidding her read and digest the clearly-written attack.

"It is a mercy," said Mrs. Abbott, "that you are in communication with a lady who is going abroad, and wants a governess for her little girl. Our character in this neighbourhood would be gone forever, if you stayed here to disgrace us. Fortunately, Mrs. Wilberforce is going to Germany, where these wicked men cannot follow with their heresies. I am glad she can come to Liverpool to interview you, as now I could not have trusted you to go to London alone. The sooner you are out of England the better, and time may bring you to your senses. I really think you are qualifying for a madhouse, if you suppose your soul can be saved through the laying on of hands by this immoral Mormon sect. The whole fraud is based on a foolish fable. Gospel folk got on very well without Joseph Smith and his apostles, but they are not enlightened, and have never been converted at all, I suppose, as this strange fallacy has failed to touch their hearts!"

Her voice shook with sarcasm. It tormented her to see that no gibes or arguments had any effect on the calm, immovable Jacinth. She appeared wrapped round by invisible armour, an atmosphere totally aloof from that which Mrs. Abbott breathed. Apparently Jacinth was no longer a member of her

home, save in bodily presence. Even her appearance had changed. Her eyes were wide and mystic, they appeared to gaze beyond with the light of vision. The colour in her cheeks was brighter than of yore, like a hectic flush beautifying a consumptive patient. Her manner was not one of arrogance, but martyred acceptance of persecution. Occasionally she spoke of the plan of salvation, based on ridiculous stories invented by the American impostor whose religion called down the censure of the whole Christian world.

Basil Hope found he had somewhat wasted his money on employing a detective to watch Jacinth. Numerous spying eyes and whispering tongues were busy with her movements. Any number of sympathizers condoled with, and yet partially congratulated him, on his broken engagement. He talked to the parents of Jacinth's protégées, thus discovering from them their wrath against Miss Abbott. Each trembled at the near approach of the Mormon wolf to their own fold, for now the Elders' invasion became a personal matter to each.

"You are well rid of such a bit of baggage," declared one old man from whom Basil bought his tobacco. "I can't see why we should be plagued by the Yankees moral and political pestilence. It's a crying evil to hear them gassing about the prosperity of Utah, just to unsettle our boys and girls,

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and attract dunderheads to a place which will grind all the life and purity out of them. They are prisoners once they get to that hell, for I happen to know the Elders arrange for a loan, defraying the expenses of their outward passage. The emigrants have to pay interest at the rate of 8 to 12 per cent. They sign at the Zion Saving Bank in Salt Lake City, promising to pay interest. By this last trick the Church keeps a permanent hold on poverty-stricken emigrants who cannot possibly wipe off the debt. A local clergyman here published this information. The whole thing with these Mormon apostles is the mighty dollar. It's precious sly of them not to make collections, as a rule, at their meetings. They pride themselves on this, but the gilt is off the gingerbread when you know that immediately after baptism, all converts must pay one-tenth of his or her income to the Mormon Church. We could give up collections at this rate, where we worship."

Basil sickened as he listened, and beat a hasty retreat. Despairing letters from Mrs. Abbott had revealed to him how true his early suspicions proved. He had tried to see Jacinth, but she resolutely refused to grant him an interview. Knowing well her sweet character in the past, he was more than ever convinced hypnotism had been used. The change in so short a time was startling and unnatural. Jacinth was no longer her real self;

her last letter to him fully revealed this fact. She told him that a new and everlasting covenant had been revealed to her, and that if she failed to abide by it, then she would be damned. She accused him of trying to prevent her entering into glory.

Mrs. Abbott could not induce Jacinth to go into her father's room. As he gradually recovered from his sharp feverish attack, the mother invented excuses for her erring daughter.

"It will be all right, dear," said Hugh's wife tenderly. "You know one must be very patient with nerves, and Jacinth is best left alone. She has had a charming letter from a lady going to Germany, who, fortunately, is able to call here this afternoon. When she has interviewed Jacinth, should she decide to engage her, I will ask Mrs. Wilberforce to have a talk with you. I am sure it will set your mind at rest to know Jacinth's employer personally. Once the girl is safely away, I firmly believe she will forget the folly of this inexplicable obsession. You must not be too hard on her, since many others have also been fascinated by this travesty of God's truth wrapped up in Gospel guise. Why, not long ago the United States Immigration Board published the fact that 1,200 young women were sent to Utah from Lancashire and Yorkshire alone."

Mrs. Abbott sighed as she repeated these startling

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figures, and her words in no way reassured the troubled father.

"They were probably poor factory hands," he said, "and can plead the excuse of ignorance. If I thought Jacinth contemplated leaving us for the vicious orgies and dark intrigues of that so-called Zion, I would rather see her lying dead beneath this roof."

Mrs. Abbott covered her face with her hands.

"No, Hugh," she said almost fiercely. "No, life at all cost. There isn't any talk of her going to the Salt Lake, she will soon be safe in Germany, where the novel surroundings may turn her thoughts from this new craze."

At that moment the maid came to Mr. Abbott's door, and informed her mistress that Mrs. Wilberforce was in the parlour talking to Miss Jacinth.

"She thought perhaps you'd like to hear the interview, mum, so she sent me to ask you to step in."

Mrs. Abbott's face brightened considerably. She feared Jacinth might exclude her from this business meeting.

"Perhaps," whispered the anxious mother, "this is the turning-point in our child's career. The bad luck may change to-day. God has sent us a deliverer."

Her cheerful attitude helped the invalid to force a watery little smile.

Mrs. Abbott entered the sitting-room nervously; she was always timid of strangers.

Jacinth was wearing her best dress, and showed traces of palpable excitement.

Mrs. Wilberforce was a tall, imposing woman, with dark hair touched by iron grey, and a young, yet singularly hard face. The bold outline of her figure was revealed by a tightly fitting gown of expensive material. Her whole air was one of affluent self-importance.

"Just the woman," thought Mrs. Abbott, "to keep Jacinth well in check."

"I have taken a great fancy to your daughter," said Mrs. Wilberforce, as she greeted Jacinth's mother. "I am not only anxious to engage a governess, I also want a companion for myself. We live in a beautiful castle on the Rhine, and entertain the best people. My little girl is too young to be stuffed with learning. Miss Abbott will be simply required for elementary study, and a nursemaid is kept for all menial necessities. It is a very healthy life, as we drive a great deal in the open air. All expenses paid, and everything found, should, I think, with the addition of a good salary, meet financial requirements. I am very particular who I engage, but the letter from Mr. Panmore as to the respectability of your family was amply sufficient. He is such a well-known man in the world of multi-millionaires."

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Mrs. Abbott beamed with sudden satisfaction. She felt as if the cloud were actually lifting at last. In grateful accents she expressed her thanks for the kind words uttered.

"Jacinth has never been away from home before," she said, "having obtained a good position as daily governess. It was her father's wish that she should see something of the world, and since he is an invalid, it would be most kind of you to spare him a moment of your valuable time."

Mrs. Wilberforce instantly smiled assent.

"I have the greatest sympathy for suffering," she declared. "Perhaps I can persuade Mr. Abbott that it is worth while parting with his daughter, to give her such an advantageous change."

As Mrs. Wilberforce entered the sick man's room, she appeared to him like some great giantess come to swallow up his child. He could not tell why, but her personality was distinctly repellent to his sub-conscious nature. Outwardly she was all that the most critical parent could desire. For his benefit she graphically described her German home, with its glorious gardens and superb views. She repeated again that they only moved in the most exclusive circles, and that Jacinth would be treated more like a visitor than a dependent. She consoled with the invalid on his permanent imprisonment, declaring she would write, from time to time, to tell him the latest news of his only child.

In spite of that strange dislike which baffled his understanding, he was bound to feel grateful.

Inwardly he told himself that Mrs. Wilberforce was an angel in disguise for so conveniently removing Jacinth from temptation. If her mouth were hard, and her eyes like steel, it might be good for the girl to be under one who apparently knew how to rule. Jacinth would never dare mention Mormonism to such an employer. In daily communication with a weaker type of womanhood, the girl might have gradually spun a cunning web round the repulsive subject, making it palatable to her listener.

"I hope you feel that your daughter will be quite safe under my care," murmured Mrs. Wilberforce at parting. "I am very fond of young people, being one of a large family. It is a grief to me that all my sisters are married. I shall do my best to make Miss Abbott thoroughly comfortable and happy."

"You are really too kind," he answered, conscious that the effort of seeing a stranger told on his wasted system, leaving him limp with fatigue.

As the door closed he lay with his eyes shut, his brain paralysed by the thought of parting. He realized with inward bitterness all Basil Hope had endured when Jacinth's love failed. Then the father felt assured no such disaster could fall upon his own shoulders. Now both men drank of the same cup.

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Mrs. Wilberforce was persuaded to have tea in the homely parlour of Briar Cottage. She announced her intention of walking to the station, as she was very fond of exercise, and drove so much in London. She asked Jacinth to accompany her, not being suré of the way.

Mrs. Abbott watched with pleasure the two figures vanishing down the road, talking animatedly, the girl's face alight with smiles.

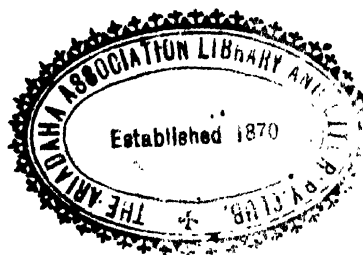
"Already the new influence is working its effect," thought the mother thankfully. "How good to turn Jacinth's mind to a fresh channel! She certainly made a great impressi^on; it was her beauty, I suppose."

The woman and girl were no sooner out of earshot than the stranger took Jacinth's hand and pressed it confidentially.

"My sister to be," said Hester Wayne earnestly; "the Lord has certainly favoured us this afternoon. The part I played was justified as a means unto an end. We are permitted to stray from the paths of truth if, by so doing, we are furthering the destiny of one about to be sealed to Mormonism. Your meek spirit of submission will reap its own reward if you hold fast to the faith, fulfilling the designs of your creation. Abide by our laws, and you shall dwell in the celestial courts where exaltations and dominions are reserved for the blessed.

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You will go down to your grave in peace, and rise up in triumph, to taste the resurrection of the just, made perfect through Ziba, your saintly husband."



CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE BROKERAGE

JACINTH listened to Hester Wayne's words with reverent awe. Ziba had said his sister was a most godly woman, doing a great work in London for Mormonism. He added, she had never married herself, being continually busy arranging happy unions for other people. She would act towards Jacinth as a mother until she became legally her sister-in-law.

"How soon can my wedding take place?" asked the future bride with fluttering pulses, betraying a note of breathless anxiety.

Hester looked at her sharply.

"Are you so eagerly awaiting the day?" she queried, veiled sarcasm hidden in her words.

Jacynth's eyes drooped.

"I love Ziba," the girl acknowledged, "not only because he is so handsome and clever, but also on account of his supreme goodness. It seems almost too great an honour that he should deign to make me part of himself. Sometimes I think it will be like

marrying a god, for I have seen him work a miracle of surpassing power. I wonder he does not consider himself above anything so mortal as marriage."

The girl recalled, as she spoke, the ecstasy of Ziba's kisses, and the burning magnetism of his touch. In her fevered dreams he appeared as a mighty pillar of fire, a spirit grand and wonderful, something superhuman, immeasurably great.

Hester's hard lips parted in a smile as she played up to the girl's infatuated notions.

"You must try to make yourself worthy of his condescension," she declared, noting afresh the grace and beauty of Jacinth's young figure. "If the love should be more on your side than his, you must remember how much he is occupied with religious affairs, and obey completely a being so far superior to yourself. In time you may become perfected through his saving grace. I only hope you will prove a treasure to your husband and a glory to his offspring. You must patiently bear the souls of men to people other planets, while eternity comes and goes, since this is life everlasting. That is one article of our creed, and I hope you wish to live the Mormon religion, and bend before a sense of righteous duty."

Jacinth noticed Hester had not answered her question as to the probable date of marriage. Diffidently she referred to it again.

"Your brother is uncertain as yet whether the

wedding ceremony should take place in England or Utah. Of course he would like me to go through the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, in which case he said you would chaperone me on the journey. He spoke of my staying first for a short time at your residence in South Tottenham."

Miss Wayne narrowed her eyes, and her face became sphinx-like as she replied—

"The house is not exactly mine, I am only a worker in it. Elvaston is the London Mormon headquarters. We sell a large quantity of our literature there. Lots of people constantly come and go—it is indeed a busy centre."

Jacinth's eyes glowed, she yearned to work in the field, and her enthusiasm was palpable to the older woman.

"Oh, I shall love to join you," she gasped. "Do describe the place to me that I may picture it while I am counting the days to departure."

Miss Wayne humoured her desire.

"It is a substantial three-storeyed building, and covers a large area," she said. "In the lower part we have workrooms for girls. We hang a sign outside, on which is written, 'Girls wanted, age fifteen, for finishing.' We get young women to work in there, till we are ready to ship them to the States. They are sworn to secrecy, and forbidden to answer any questions. Only the other day a man, whom we believed to be an anti-Mormon spy, asked two of

our girls how many were at work within, but they both refused to give any information."

The speaker did not add that the window panes were painted green, so that passers-by could not possibly see inside.

"We hope," continued Hester, "to convert a number of Riverpool girls. You cannot imagine how I have brightened the lives of many young people who could not possibly expect to marry in England. You have not enough men to go round this side, and girls without fortunes do not get a proper chance. Of course you are especially favoured since Ziba is one of our leaders, and a man of great influence. In time he will place in your hands the keystone of Mormon power."

Her words puzzled Jacinth, but something in Hester's face forbade any further questioning. Suddenly she became aloof and mysterious, since she had no idea as yet of preaching the celestial marriage doctrine to a mere novice. Well she knew this impressionable young soul was ripening for fanatical allegiance. Hester little doubted Jacinth would eventually be reconciled to their great system of patriarchal unions.

"The followers of Joseph Smith," continued Miss Wayne proudly, "are among God's noblemen. Contact with Ziba will develop in you the principles of purity and submission. I am not really on my way to the station now. I am staying the night with

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my brother, in order that we may talk over the date of your removal."

Jacinth gave a sigh of satisfaction.

"My home has become very difficult," she confessed. "You see, my father remembers the days when Mormons practised polygamy, just like the men of God in the Old Testament. He refuses to believe all that is altered now. I am sorry it was ever an article of Mormon faith, since it hinders the work, giving scope for lies."

Hester bridled visibly, she seemed to grow taller, looking down disdainfully at the slim figure so ethereal in contrast to her own.

"It is a beautiful idea in theory," she replied. "It represented order, unselfishness, and morality when practised under Church authority. The Saints, filled with righteousness, deemed it lawful to take many wives, in order that their seed might be scattered broadcast on the earth. The hindrances of law have interfered with a divinely ordained edict. Women were made less selfish by polygamous life. Their one-sided desires had to be restrained, while jealousy, bred of the devil, was necessarily curbed. I shall hope when you are at Utah to take you to Forest Dale, a suburb of Salt Lake City. You may occasionally enjoy a holiday there. Its community is exclusively Mormon."

Jacinth wondered why the words were accompanied by a low laugh, which echoed some hidden

thought. She fancied that pleasant memories welled back into the woman's mind. Evidently Hester's days had been happy ones in Forest Dale. The innocent English girl could little dream that the place alluded to was the so-called "lambing ground" for the bringing of polygamous children into the world. The patriarchs, elders, and bishops of Mormondom, when unborn souls are about to be ushered into the community of saints, send their plural wives to this convenient suburb, where they can evade the law of tyrannical man, which seeks to prevent the entrance of these spirits into existence. A feminine stranger in their midst need answer no awkward catechism, the child that is born to her arrives unquestioned. When in due time the mother returns with her infant, who is unrecognized by the State, she resumes her maiden name, though living in the house of the saint who is the baby's father. His excuse is that he must obey a holy revelation, rather than earthly laws forced upon him by ungodly men.

"May I come with you to see Ziba?" asked Jacinth shyly, "our meetings are so few and so secret that sometimes my love seems starved. I am sure he would not mind if you have no objection."

Miss Wayne frowned ominously.

"I am sorry, my dear child, to see you erring on the side of unmaidenly forwardness. If my brother had wished you to visit him, he would have made his desire known to me first. We have much private

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business to discuss, you would be greatly in the way."

A deep flush of humiliation crept to Jacinth's cheeks. She wondered if, after all, she should like this severe sister-in-law, whom Ziba had praised so highly.

"Any way," she thought, "when we are married, I need not see much of her. She is useful now as a convenient chaperone when I break away from Briar Cottage and go to London with Ziba. Perhaps, like many relations, she a little resents his love for me, seeing I am so much younger than herself. At least I must not forget her kindness in personating the imaginary Mrs. Welberforce to-day. She carried the scheme through beautifully. Ziba said she would."

Still a little piqued by Hester's past utterance, Jacinth declared it was time to return. Hester made no protest, saying she knew her way perfectly well, having often been to Riverpool.

Jacinth half expected a sisterly kiss, but a stiff handshake was all she received.

"Thank you so much for what you have done to-day," said the girl in parting.

Hester could not resist one last rap as she answered sharply—

"Of course I did it for my brother's sake, since you were an entire stranger to me. You are indeed blest that it has pleased him to open the door of the heavenly kingdom, and admit you as one of ourselves

In Utah you will meet the finest set of people on the face of the earth; they have hewn down their enemies with a sharp two-edged sword. Of course I speak figuratively. I need not wish you happiness, for, since Ziba has selected you, it is yours already. You will join the three hundred and seventy-five thousand men and women, who know that our present leader, Joseph F. Smith, is in direct communication with God. These people have greater political power than any million in the United States, since they are an unit. They follow the will of their prophet, and this is the backbone of the Mormon Empire. Be proud of your sisterhood with us, but not so proud that you forget to bend your head to Ziba's commands."

She turned away, and Jacinth, still in the throes of Elder Wayne's uncanny influence, watched her hurrying to his abode with envious eyes.

"It was cruel not to take me," the girl murmured rebelliously. "Perhaps she did not realize that heaven opens to me when I am in his sight."

Slowly Jacinth retraced her steps, but before she came in sight of Briar Cottage she heard a panting sound behind her, and turning, found Maggie Piper following in her wake.

"I simply must speak to you, Miss," she gasped, "though Aunt Arabella would well-nigh murder me if she knew. All my people are like furies over this Mormon job, but I mean to stick to it, come what

may. I wanted to thank you for putting me on to a good thing. I am to meet an Elder in London who is a first-rate fellow. We have been corresponding daily, introduced through Elder Wayne. First we exchanged photographs, and he's just the style of man I like. He says he will take me to theatres, and give me the time of my life. We are to be married in the Mormon religion. He tells me it is real splendid out in Utah, the women have it all their own way there. A lady is taking me to London to-morrow, some relation of Elder Wayne's—a sister, I think."

Jacinth caught her breath as she clasped Maggie Piper's hand.

"Oh! Maggie," she whispered, glancing fearfully round, "I don't like the way you talk. You seem to forget the religious side. I wanted to save your soul when I led you to Mormonism."

"That may come later on," replied Maggie consolingly, sorry if her words had hurt Miss Abbott. "You see, it's different for us girls who stand all day behind the counter, and don't get any fun out of life, to be offered a good home and a well-to-do husband—it seems like heaven. I was always one for adventure, so I could not throw up such a chance. Although my future husband seems so fond of gaiety, he scatters his letters with a lot of texts. The Mormons even kneel down and pray at dances in Utah, so that would suit you, miss. Maybe we

‘ shall meet out there, for my man tells me he heard you were coming along with Elder Wayne. I am of age, so no one can stop me ; but there will be ructions at home.”

Jacinth paled as she listened, suddenly conscious of the vast responsibility on her own shoulders.

“ It’s rather a terrible idea,” she replied, “ starting off to marry a man you haven’t seen. It’s different for me, for I know and love Ziba Wayne. After his marvellous miracle I felt I could trust him to the end of the world, I learnt he was able to save me in the after life. But you are daring, your plan appears terribly rash.” • •

• Maggie laughed gaily as the evening breezes played through her luxuriant hair.

“ If I don’t take to him, they say they will find me some one else ; it’s just like a matrimonial agency, only you pay nothing in advance. I shall refuse to be baptized unless they get me a chap I fancy. Not that I’m difficult to please—beggars mustn’t be choosers, and I’ve not had a single proposal in Riverpool.”

Jacinth still appeared grieved as Maggie poured forth her frivolous ideas.

“ You are only looking on the earthly side at present,” said Miss Abbott softly ; “ I shall make it a special prayer, Maggie, that the good Elders may plant the seed of life in your heart. Are you going first to South Tottenham ? ”

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Maggie nodded assent.

"That's the shop. Elvaston is the name of the house. Won't Aunt Arabella be wild? She is awful at letter writing; she'll write to the papers as sure as a gun! I may turn out quite a celebrity. Who knows they won't be wanting my picture for the illustrated weeklies."

"I have not seen any other of our 'reading girls' since the bicycle ride on that great afternoon. Have they been converted too?" asked Jacinth eagerly.

"Some seem to be more or less," Maggie replied. "But I don't know if they're willing to start off and do the thing properly. Some have sweethearts here, and won't throw them over. I am told Mr. Hope is leaving Riverpool; folks say he can't stand the place now you've given him the go-by."

The words were scarcely out of her lips when she received a stunning blow on the shoulder from an umbrella. Turning in startled surprise, she found herself face to face with her Aunt Arabella.

The old woman was dressed in early Victorian style, a circular bonnet framing her whitened locks. She quivered with indignation as she looked from her niece to Jacinth.

"A timely meeting certainly," she cried, "since Maggie has been strictly forbidden to so much as exchange a word with you, Miss Abbott. Do you know it were far better if the Biblical millstone had been

hung round your neck before you offended all these little ones? "

Maggie giggled audibly.

"I don't call myself so very little, five foot seven in my stockings. It isn't fair, aunt, to blame it on to Miss Abbott, after all the interest she's taken in me and those other girls. I was only passing the time of day, and, apologizing for your behaviour in writing to Briar Cottage."

Mrs. Piper gave a pronounced snort of indignation.

"I have just called personally on Mrs. Abbott to ascertain if she had yet put you away," addressing Jacinth fiercely. "The girls of this neighbourhood are not safe while you coerce them to take the wrong turning. I was glad to learn from your mother that, at any rate, you are to be shipped out of the country. It would serve you right to go to Utah instead of Germany. Only those who have had a taste of the Mormon slavery know what it really means. No one will pity you when your eyes are opened to the disgrace and mortification of that sinful set."

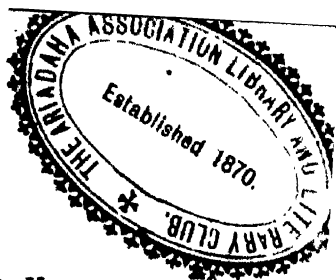
She seized Maggie by the arm, dragging her away as if Jacinth's presence contaminated the air.

Maggie looked back with a knowing wink, expressive of her flighty sentiments so openly stated to the promised wife of a Mormon saint.

Jacinth sighed deeply and clasped her hands.

"The school of persecution," she told herself, "is a hard one, but it fits the soul for godly sacrifice."

Ziba said I must suffer patiently, and never answer back. My days of endurance are numbered now. Soon I shall be with the elect in the safe haven of Elvaston House."



CHAPTER X

THE BUFFETINGS OF THE DEVIL

BASIL was reading a regretful letter from his employer on receiving the resignation of such a promising young manager.

"Although you have had some private trouble," wrote the owner of the business, "which makes this neighbourhood distasteful to you, are you justified in throwing up a good salary, seeing that work is so scarce nowadays? I will gladly recommend you, but fear it is not in my power to find you another berth. If you care to reconsider your hasty determination, you are at liberty to do so, and I shall not engage any one else for a few days."

Basil was touched at this proof of esteem, but as far as finances went, he now felt callous. With his life robbed of love, with no one to work for, it mattered little if he were obliged to sink back to a minor post. His talents were sufficient to ensure him finding work at a lower salary, and the thought of remaining at Liverpool now became intolerable. He had only himself to consider, being an orphan, with no brothers or sisters. He contemplated, if

Jacinth left England, and he could be of no further use to the Abbots, joining a bachelor uncle in the Colonies, who had grown wealthy in commerce. For years the two had regularly corresponded, and in his last letter Uncle Roper spoke of failing health—writing in a particularly affectionate strain. He declared Basil was his only link with the old country, he hinted he would be glad to see his nephew before he died.

Reading between the lines, Basil suspected the writer felt the first warnings of some mortal disease.

"I will go out by the next boat," Basil resolved, "if, as Mr. Abbott says, Jacinth is safe in Germany. Who knows what the years may bring forth? I shall tell her I am building up a home for her there, should she ever change her mind."

He sat down to answer his late employer before writing to Roper Morton.

He had only penned a few lines when his landlady informed him Mr. Carson wished to see him.

Basil rose excitedly. Perhaps Carson, the detective, had some fresh news concerning Mormon tactics. He was no longer employing Carson to watch Jacinth; three days of that proved more than sufficient to assure Basil he had not misjudged the girl. His short acquaintance with Carson had, however, placed them on friendly terms, the latter feeling a genuine sympathy for the young man whose future had been wrecked by his Mormon scourge.

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"I have not come on business, Mr. Hope," said Carson, as Basil shook him warmly by the hand. "I only looked in to see how you were getting on, trusting things might be going better now. I should be really glad to hear you and Miss Abbott had made it up again."

Basil sighed as he drew a chair forward for his visitor.

"I am afraid that is more than I can expect at present," he answered sally. "Her father tells me she is going with a lady to Germany as governess to one little girl. He revels in the fact that no proselytizing Elders are allowed in that country."

Carson wrinkled his brow; he had a peculiarly expressive face.

"It seems highly improbable Miss Abbott would consent to go to Germany, of all places, at this time. You cannot imagine what tricks these Mormons are up to, and it looks to me very like a plot to get her off to Utah with one of their batches of human prey. It might be wise if you warned the parents to make very sure she really is bound for the situation ostensibly arranged for. She is still undoubtedly under the influence of Ziba Wayne, one of the cleverest recruiters in the Mormon ranks. Don't think I am fishing for a job; if you set your mind to it, you could do detective work yourself. Find out when she is leaving Briar Cottage, follow her up to London, and see where she goes. You may have an eye-opener, but

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perhaps you have ceased to care sufficiently to take the trouble."

Basil Hope paled as he listened. He could not tell this man how desperately he cared. His was not a love to die at a single blow. It had grown with years into strong dominion. Now the protecting element added to its chivalry. The fact that Jacinth was weak failed to turn his love into scorn. She appeared to him like a child lost in some magic forest of evil, caught in chills he could not unwind, entrapped by allurements unknown to himself, little dreamt of by those who criticized her harshly. His love pleaded extenuating circumstances, finding excuses even in the darkest hour of his misery.

He never thought of her as really faithless. She was like some dear one suffering from temporary insanity capable of cure, a sick soul in the throes of delirium.

"Your words are well worth consideration," answered Basil gratefully. "I have not the heart to frighten that already distracted couple at Briar Cottage. I can discover all I want to know without their suspecting the reason. I shall say I want a last word with Jacinth in London, if possible, before she leaves. I know they will gladly give me all particulars of her departure, since they are most anxious to make matters right between us."

"In the meanwhile," murmured Carson slyly, "shall you let that humbug Wayne go scot free? If

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he had come between me and my girl, I know exactly what I should have done."

Basil pressed him to explain his meaning, half guessing what he would say.

"Well, of course, this is terribly unprofessional," Carson acknowledged, "and if you act on the suggestion, never quote me should you be found out. The law is very fair, and even if you were had up for assault, Wayne would not get heavy damages. I should like to see some one overtake him on a lonely road and horsewhip the fellow soundly. He is a tall chap, but you are very muscular, too. I know which I would back. Bullies are often cowards, and no one really manly would be snaring young women away in that underhand fashion."

A fierce light shone in Basil's eyes, revealing to the speaker his desire for revenge.

"I've thought of it many times," confessed Jacinth's lover; "in fact I was only waiting until my resignation had been accepted at the works. I felt in case of trouble I had better be a free agent."

Carson had only a few minutes to spare, and rose with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Well, it's the first time I've given lawless advice," he said in farewell, "but if more people took such matters into their own hands, there would be less chicken-stealing."

He paused, suddenly remembering an important fact.

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" You know, we've got these fellows under our eye, and Wayne is addressing an open-air meeting in the suburbs this very night. He will probably be returning home as usual about ten o'clock, by way of Beechy Lane. If any one happened to hang about there, it's a lonely spot, and the Saint might be caught off his guard."

He left Basil deep in contemplation, impatient for the hour when punishment could be administered to the man who had ruined his life.

Jacinth dared not attend the meeting, though she yearned to see more of Zilla. He wrote it would be unsafe, and might delay her departure by making fresh trouble with her parents.

" You must be wise as a serpent, if harmless as a dove," he wrote to his future wife. " Your best plan now is to say little of Mormonism, and humour your father as much as possible. In blinding the eyes of those who would hold you back from the faith, you will be furthering the ends of justice, and making the path easier for the Lord's anointed."

Jacinth took his advice, and with a chastened air crept to Mr. Abbott's room. After inquiring for his health, she talked much of Mrs. Wilberforce and her future life in that safe castle on the Rhine. Easily deceived, he thought her so full of the new project that possibly the Mormon danger was passing.

Nearly all Jacinth's " reading girls " attended the meeting arranged that evening by Elder Wayne.

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They were not disappointed in his eloquence. Apart from expounding the articles of faith, he dwelt much on the wonders and delight of a journey to Utah. He described the great bridge, a masterpiece of architecture, which for twenty-four miles crosses the Salt Lake. He likened this powerful bridge to the spiritual structure of Mormonism, by which they could pass from the valley of lost souls to the safe haven of Zion. He pictured the beauty of that vast stretch of water some eighty miles long, jewelled by islands of solid rock. "The mountains, like God's sentinels," he cried, "rear their sun-flecked peaks to an azure sky, but remember, you men who ~~find work~~ scarce in this country, those heights do not stand for beauty alone. They are peopled with busy miners who glean from their fastnesses iron, quicksilver, zinc, jasper, alum, and coal. Come to Utah if you would be rich under the Mormon banner, and thank God for drawing you to our mighty Temple, which holds a thousand worshippers. This building took forty-six years to plant in our midst."

He did not add that those who joined the Saints would find that the payment of tithing absorbed an appreciable portion of their gains, dues made heavy, since they secured a future residence in heaven. Ziba knew if he were honest with his listeners, giving them a clear statement of facts, that Utah would lose its elusive charm. He might have boldly

informed them that the city was divided into wards, while each bishop presiding received one-tenth of the tithes of that ward. Also, that the first Sunday in every month was a fast day, the saving being paid to the church, those who refused to fast paying double. All must contribute to this compulsory fund.

Maggie Piper saw visions, as she listened, of the fleshpots of Egypt. She was leaving Riverpool next day with Hester Wayne, who had complained of feeling too tired to attend the suburban gathering.

In conclusion, Ziba proclaimed that angels were not permitted to descend from heaven and teach the people, but this power had been delegated to Mormon Elders, who were the direct recipients of a precious charge, namely, the Everlasting Gospel.

"We represent rays of living light," he cried. "When St. John declared, in the Book of Revelation, that he saw an angel with this same Everlasting Gospel, he meant Joseph Smith's angel with the golden plates. Take care, therefore, that before the Mighty One shall descend from on high to wind up the history of the world, ye accept the Book of Mormon by which eternity alone may be gained."

One man who had come from curiosity, and was in reality a church-goer, turned to Maggie Piper, reading the intense excitement in her face.

"The whole idea," he whispered, "is absolutely

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pagan. I never heard a more human concoction evolved from the imagination of Mormonism's founder. I hope you are not going to accept this trayesty of a great truth. All the fabric is faulty and incomplete."

"Maybe," murmured Maggie, with a shrug of her shoulders, "but they are bound to spout a lot to keep well advertised. I'm going most likely to Utah myself, but am not deluded into thinking I shall find it a spiritual Paradise. I want earthly comforts, they are good enough for me. Money is flowing there, and it's easy to find a rich husband."

The man looked amazed at her credulity and ignorance.

"That's the lay," he muttered, "to wile silly young girls like you from home and safety. For my part, I would like to clear these agents of the Mormon plague right out of Riverpool. You are hurrying to the gates of hell, young woman, and you'll know this to your cost when you find yourself thousands of miles away in a strange land."

He turned his back disgustedly on Maggie, who received his words with a smile.

"I wish," she thought, "Elder Wayne would ask me to walk home with him, but he's such a one for being alone. I suppose those grand words take a lot of thinking out."

As usual Ziba waited till the whole crowd had dispersed before returning to the city. He was tired

after giving a full hour's discourse, and did not wish to talk. As he wended his way homeward by the quiet route, he indulged ecstatic thoughts of Jacinth's beauty, a treasure to be shortly delivered into his lustful hands.

"How she adores me!" he murmured, "and what a complete mastery I have obtained over the fair young thing! She will lie in my arms like a trusting lamb. I will teach her the real meaning of love."

So absorbed was he in contemplating his honeymoon with Jacinth, he did not hear a soft step behind him, the tread of one in noiseless shoes. His attacker emerged from the shade of a hedge, and carried under his arm a stout whip. Before the saint realized anything unusual had occurred, a volley of stinging cuts rained on his face and shoulders. Blood spurted from his lips, as he wildly fought the swinging thong, shrieking aloud in terror and pain. So nimble was his assailant that he dodged the return blows with the skill of a matador evading an infuriated bull.

"You infernal villain, take this, and this, and this," cried the voice of the unknown, as now the whining elder fell on his knees to entreat mercy. For a moment the punishing hand was stayed, fearing to thrash out Ziba's miserable existence. Though stiff and smarting from the chastisement, Elder Wayne took advantage of the merciful pause.

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Springing to his feet, he ran for his life, never halting till he was once again in the haunts of men, a dilapidated and disfigured apostle, bearing in his body what he afterwards described as the buffeting of the devil.

Oddly enough, the police heard nothing of this night attack. Conferring with Elder Hoge and some other brethren, the now terrified Mormon saw fit to bury in oblivion an assault which some might call justified.

"I fear," declared Ziba, "the cowardly cur may prove to be Miss Abbott's *ex-fiancé*, and of course he would state his case from the anti-Mormon point of view. Besides, I was too unnerved to trace the fellow's features, though some day I may be given an opportunity to pay him back in even stronger coin. Satan led him astray, a victim to his own vain imaginations. Blood atonement may yet fall; personally I should be justified if I drew a knife across his throat. He has made himself worthy of death, since his jealous wrath is uncontrolled. He will be tormented in the lake of brimstone, for he dared to lay sacrilegious hands on one of Israel's elect."

Basil returned to his rooms a happier man for the success of his adventure.

A letter awaited him in an unknown handwriting; somehow he instantly felt it contained startling news. The night had been one of thrilling incident,

his nerves were braced up with the stimulating effect of action.

His correspondent proved to be a colonial solicitor, who wrote to inform him of his uncle's death.

"The late Roper Morton," ran the words, "has left you property amounting to about £700 per annum. Full details to follow later, and the legacy shall be handed over to you so soon as the will has been proved."

Basil felt stunned by the news. His memory of Uncle Roper was but shadowy, which softened the pang of personal loss. The comfortable income appeared in his eyes a fabulous fortune. Sharply he realized what this letter would have meant to him a short time ago.

For a moment he was assailed by a violent temptation. He would fly to Jacinth, and entreat her to marry him on the strength of his financial position. He could point out to her the comfort of a settled income, bait his allurements with the hardening snare of pounds, shilling and pence. He might gain his desire and hold her fast, bought like a chattel with his unexpected riches.

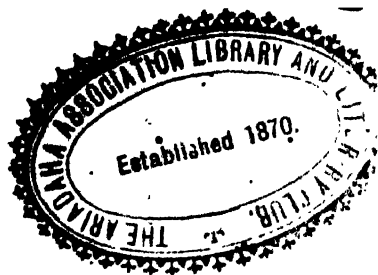
But a moment's consideration brought his better nature into play. If Jacinth were to return to him it must be in ignorance of his newly-acquired wealth. He had not the heart to entrap her into the sin of marrying without love. At least this money would enable him to shadow her, and seek that distant

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spot where, by the romantic waters of the Rhine, he might fan into life a dead passion. Even Mr. and Mrs. Abbott must be kept in ignorance of this windfall, since he guessed the tantalizing effect of the news on their minds.

Gratefully he thought of the dead man, bitterly regretting it had never occurred to him before to join his uncle. He could almost fancy that the spirit of that rugged personality stood beside him now, giving him strength to face the future, even though Jacinth held aloof.

"What an eventful night!" he thought; "certainly my fate marches. Perhaps this fresh power has been given into my hands for a great purpose. Even yet I may save Jacinth from Mormon delusions and hypnotic intrigues. Carson shall help me. I can afford to take him to London. We will fight the dragons together."



CHAPTER XI

THE GIRLHOOD OF ENGLAND

MR. ABBOTT was feeling calmer, resigned to the parting with Jacinth, since her future appeared so rosy.

"It would be selfish to stand in the girl's light," he told his wife, "especially as the arrangement has made her so happy."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Abbott, "she is a different girl since Mrs. Wilberforce came and turned her thoughts from that obnoxious subject which had such a disastrous effect on her character. Basil writes he is going to try and get a word with her in London before she starts for this new situation. It would not surprise me at all to hear they had made up their differences."

A smile broke over the sick man's face at the mere suggestion. He clung to his treasured idea that Jacinth would still become Mrs. Hope.

"Basil is one in a thousand," he said. "Not many men would give her another chance. He was never one to judge hastily; he has that great possession—a well-balanced brain."

It was late in the evening when Mr. Abbott asked what Jacinth was doing.

"She is looking over her clothes, tidying them up for departure," replied the mother, not daring to think how she would miss her girl. "I am fitting her out as best I can, getting a few new things. She does repay one for nice dressing, being so pretty. I have made up my mind to take her to London myself, and hand her over to Mrs. Wilberforce at the terminus. She kindly offered to meet the train, no trouble seems too great for her. I am afraid you will miss me, dear, but I should feel uneasy if Jacinth travelled alone."

Mr. Abbott fully endorsed the words.

"Quite right, for you never know who might be following her. The Mormons are so keen on converts they would use any subterfuge to stop her going to Germany."

Jacinth caught the words as she came softly to the door to bid her father good-night. The kiss she gave him was cold and meaningless, he realized the difference, and his heart saddened.

"Sleep well, my child," he murmured, and his eyes were moist as he looked on the delicate young face painfully conscious of its beauty.

"I set such store on her good looks," he thought, "and perhaps it was wrong. They may prove a snare to men and a curse to herself."

For the first time in his life he could almost have wished Jacinth were plain.

"I'll come to you presently," said Mrs. Abbott, as the girl withdrew. "I want to see how your boxes are getting on."

When the lights were out and the cottage shut up for the night Mrs. Abbott joined her daughter. She found Jacinth still busy with preparations. Her unbound hair was hanging loosely over her shoulders, and she wore a loose dressing-gown.

"I don't think Mrs. Wilberforce can complain of my wardrobe," she said with a note of satisfaction. "I really have taken trouble, for the castle sounded so grand."

Mrs. Abbott sighed, her lips trembled as she answered dolefully—

"Home won't be the same when you are gone; your father and I will miss you terribly. Of course we are glad you should see the world; parents mustn't be selfish, but, oh! it's very hard to say good-bye."

Jacinth checked her mother's rising tears by a quick retort.

"Don't break down," she pleaded fervently. "If you believe in God you will know everything is for the best. I act under Divine guidance, feeling convinced I am doing the Almighty's will."

Jacinth had never talked in this strain before meeting Ziba, and her mother felt oddly perplexed as she listened.

"I wish I could believe as you do," she murmured.

"I am afraid my faith is less strong, Jacinth. Perhaps in time it will grow and develop, then I may be a happier woman."

Jacinth longed to unfold the tenets of her new religion. A sudden hope leapt to her heart that some day Mrs. Abbott might also embrace Mormonism.

"The time is not yet ripe," she thought regretfully. "Ziba warned me to say nothing at present, trusting my example may work the miracle, and eventually draw both my parents into the fold."

"I am very tired," said the girl, "and you are keeping Father awake. Good night, mother, don't worry about me. I have angel guardians, unseen by mortal eyes."

Mrs. Abbott kissed her tenderly, hurrying away lest she should break down. Long after she had cried herself to sleep, Jacinth was still moving about her room.

The clock struck twelve, and she was just about to extinguish the light when a strange sensation possessed her. At first she was conscious of a certain breathless ecstasy, a feeling as if some wonderful influence filled the room with magnetism. For a moment an uncanny chill of superstition turned her cold. She could almost believe that the hair of her head rose as if drawn upward by a draught. She sank into a chair, wondering what to expect. Half

closing her eyes, she saw Ziba, in fancy, as she had seen him in his Riverpool room, when she lay with her head on his shoulder. Every fibre of her being woke to some actual call. Suddenly she knew something was desired of her, and sprang up quickly, feeling like one in an hypnotic trance. Barely knowing what she did, she commenced hastily to dress, tearing on her clothes with panting speed. She did not wait to coil up her hair, but left it hanging in a waving mass. The only sound in the room was her own gasping breath, as she hastened to obey the will of an invisible presence. The world was no longer a tangible place of abode. She felt like a disembodied spirit called out of her flesh to wander in unknown realms. Her movements became ghost-like and stealthy. She had slipped her feet into soft shoes, and now she turned her door handle noiselessly, stealing forth into the dark, like a wraith of some restless soul seeking a haven of refuge. Her brain realized keenly that any sound might wake her parents sleeping on the ground floor. As she passed their room, she hardly seemed to touch the carpet, so light were her footfalls. She walked with one hand outstretched, imagining it was clasped by an invisible guide. More than once she was certain she felt the touch of human fingers, yet no one had entered Briar Cottage. Now she cautiously unfastened the hall door. A moment later the cool night air must beat upon her forehead, and she

would be free. Stepping out with a sense of wild elation, Jacinth drew the door ajar without fastening the catch. The moon had risen high in the heavens, and, shining down, whitened the deserted road, making the scene appear novel and unreal to the girl's dazed eyes. The sky was flecked with hurrying clouds speeding away before the central light.

For a moment Jacinth stood still, her heart beating fiercely. She knew she was not sleep-walking, yet could not explain why she had ventured forth to face the night alone. As she paused, wondering, a figure materialized from the shadows. This time it was no spirit form, but a tall, dark-coated man, with a slouch hat drawn over his eyes, and a muffler partially concealing his chin.

"Angel, wife, love of my soul," he whispered passionately, and the voice was that of Ziba Wayne.

Turning quickly, Jacinth swayed forward, and was caught in his arms.

"What does it mean?" she gasped; "oh! Ziba, what does it mean?"

Holding the trembling form, he drew her away from the cottage, and answered in a soothing whisper—

"My sweet one, I had need of you, I was sick with love. I wanted to prove my power, to summon you forth as the night summons the stars. I stood beneath your window, and, looking up, called upon

Heaven to let my spirit enter your chamber and draw you down to the garden below. I worked the charm upon my knees ; I had faith, and knew you would come. Now I am assured that our future happiness will be made perfect by this union of souls. I dared not seek you by daylight. I feared the evil-doers who are ever about my path. I desired speech with you alone, I thirsted for your kisses. You are as safe with me here as if we stood in a great concourse of people. You are doing no wrong in obeying the behest of an Apostle."

A great flood of joy swept over Jacinth. Alternately she laughed and cried as she clung about his neck. Delightedly he ran his fingers through her loosened hair, revelling in its glossy lustre.

"My moonbeam," he whispered, "how is it I love you so dearly ? You were made for passionate adoration, you stir my blood in a new strange fashion. You are the elixir of all my desire. But I did not call you to myself merely for the sake of these heaven-sent kisses. I wish to put you on your guard. I noticed, to my sorrow, an unexpected flaw in my sister's character. She has never been jealous of any friends, but your beauty seems to have upset her. You know what sisters are, they sometimes like to keep their brothers to themselves. Be warned, lest she should attempt in any way to sever us. I do not say that she would dare. Until this moment she has always proved a virtuous Mormon woman,

eager for the happiness of others, and a firm believer in the creed of Latter-Day Saints. I want you to know that I have never loved before this hour. The love story of my life lies in your little hands. When I see you gazing into my eyes as the flower looks up to the sun, I feel like that great, fiery king, and bend to pour my healing rays upon your delicate being. Cling to me always, know that your white arms about my neck and your lips upon my cheek hold magic balm. You are enveloped by my personality, you are chained to my soul. I could have called you to-night across space, and you would have fought your way through all obstacles to kneel at my feet. I cannot wait for the sealing ordinance to take place in Utah. We will be married in London as soon as possible, and Hester need not return with us to America."

Jacinth felt a weight lifted from her shoulders. She had somewhat dreaded the journey in Miss Wayne's company.

"I wanted to come to you the other day," sighed the girl as she nestled in his embrace, "but your sister would not let me. I thought at the time she was a little hard, considering we were engaged. I can't think how you drew me down to-night, when I never for one moment suspected I should find you at our door. I have almost ceased to be surprised at anything since the gipsy child woke to life. I live in the hope your prayers may some day

convert my parents. Mother would more easily receive instruction than my bigoted father."

Ziba thought what a fine revenge on the disapproving Hugh Abbott could his wife be lured away to seek her daughter in Utah.

"The Elders might induce her to follow and join you in happy Zion," he told the girl. "When we are clear of this country, I will leave instructions for one of our most tactful associates to call at Briar Cottage. In the meanwhile you will have written, trying to show your mother the light, begging her to join you."

Jacinth replied she would do her best, but mother would never come unless her paralysed husband agreed.

"Mr. Abbott could go to a nursing home, and be well looked after," said Ziba lightly. "He would be none the worse for being left in the lurch, since he has Mr. Panmore's money at his back."

Suddenly Jacinth gave a startled little cry.

"Oh! Ziba," she exclaimed, "you have had an accident, your face is scarred."

He pulled his scarf more closely round his neck.

"A fall in the dark," he murmured. "I tripped up in Beechy Lane, returning from a highly successful meeting. Maggie Piper was there, spending her last night in Riverpool well. She left early in the morning with my sister. Miss Piper will be blessed, having taken this step in the right direction, gravitating

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towards the infinite. Her people are making a sorry stir. They cared little enough for the girl while she was at home, but it is the same with many a pleasing maiden who wastes her sweetness on the desert air. Your *protégée* is saved from a life of drudgery. You must rejoice that you were able to snatch her from perdition."

Jacinth confided her fears that Maggie had a worldly spirit.

"The Church will crush that out of her," he answered sternly. "Those who transgress will meet with the due reward of their folly. We shall not let the soul be lost. How different to yourself! What an example you are to the girlhood of England!"

His words of praise stimulated Jacinth, radiantly conscious under the flattery. She fancied her heart sang for very joy as she hung upon his words, drinking them in as a heavenly draught.

"Has Mr. Panmore ever sent you any gifts of money?" asked Ziba.

"Now and again, on my birthday," replied Jacinth. "I have kept, too, some of my earnings at the Lovesays; they are in the Savings Bank at Riverpool."

"You must draw out all you possess, even though it be a veritable mite," Ziba told her authoritatively. "Bring every penny you can muster to Elvaston House. In future I will supply all your needs, and

it would be wiser to entrust me with this paltry sum. I may see fit to use it in order that a blessing from the Lord may rest upon your head. It is a glorious opportunity to consecrate to the Church worldly possessions through the blessed Order of Enoch. This godly practice was instituted by Brigham Young, our late beloved, who was made a heavenly steward, a man distinguished for his piety."

Jacinth was too happy to think of money at that moment, and accepted all Ziba's suggestions with absolute submission.

"I should only take your savings because the Lord had need of them," he added, knowing well the mesmerized girl was in the seventh heaven of exaltation.

He wanted her to be penniless in order to bind her to him more firmly when she discovered she was not his only wife.

"If you stay here much longer," he murmured, leading her back to the cottage, "I shall never be able to let you go. I have nearly crushed the life out of you as it is. You are like some wondrous nymph of the night with your floating hair. It is tantalizing to part, but this meeting is fraught with danger; if we were seen, the ungodly minds of men might misconstrue my intentions towards you. I shall not magnetize you again to creep secretly into my arms. In a few days from now we shall meet

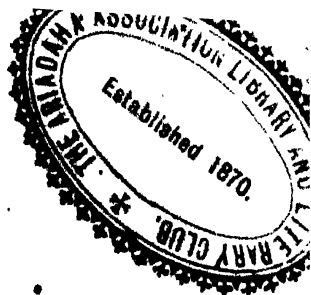
in London. My vivid imagination can supply the joys to be. Remember you hold a Saint's exclusive love, while I bask in the dazzling light of my Jacinth's true womanhood. Your soul is now unpolluted by the attentions of that vile Gentile, Basil Hope. Sanctified by the acceptance of yourself, you will enter undefiled into the blessed Paradise of our Mormon marriage. Know that the man you wed is great as the Biblican Fathers—Jacob, who wrestled with the angel and prevailed; Moses, the mighty law-giver of Israel; and Abraham, the Father of the Faithful and the friend of God. Creep softly, my dear child, to your chamber of rest. Hold your breath lest, by the slightest sound, you rouse those other sleepers who might misjudge your action. As I return, I shall softly murmur a triumphant hymn, like David, the sweet singer of Israel. Your dreams shall be fair, knowing how soon you will leave father and mother to cleave unto me."

As Jacinth felt the fire of his good-night kiss, she saw in him a glorious vision created by her controlled mind. The girl's dazzled eyes failed to recognize that her deed was about to ruthlessly snap every family tie and break down her father and mother, bringing upon them untold misery.

With smiling lips she stole back into the house, and up the narrow staircase, silently as a shadow, her brain still obsessed by the strange happenings of the night. Fully dressed Jacinth flung herself

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down upon the bed, lying for hours in a half hypnotic trance, till daylight stole into the room. Then she roused herself with an effort, putting aside those hastily-donned garments, evidences of a pilgrimage which must never be known.



CHAPTER XII.

A PREMONITION

WITH a mighty effort Hugh Abbott braced himself to say good-bye cheerfully to Jacinth. He feared he might break down and cloud the girl's last moment in the old home.

She could hardly conceal her pleasure at going, when the great morning dawned which heralded her new life with Ziba. To the infatuated tool of his powerful will, Briar Cottage had become a veritable prison. Jacinth dared not speak within its walls of the enchanting future, which drew her with cords of love to the brink of this untried religion. The magic spell of Ziba's allurements made those mundane hours in her parents' house appear colourless with grey monotony. Now she was about to soar, to breathe the stimulating atmosphere of that busy centre described by Hester Wayne. The Lord's work lay at Elvaston, besides the earthly joy of union with Ziba.

Thus her mind ran, as Hugh Abbott held her face between his hands and gazed with a lingering look into his daughter's unreadable eyes. He was trying to photograph each detail of that sweet countenance upon memory.

"I shall often conjure you up in imagination," he told her. "I shall see you hovering by my bed, and picture you a little child again. You will think of me sometimes, lying here, waiting for the glad day of your return. I must exist for that alone, little woman, so do not stay away too long."

Just for the moment a lump came in Jacinth's throat, she felt stifled and unnerved. Vaguely she wondered if she would ever stand again by the familiar bed, listening to her father's voice and cheering his solitude.

But the girl's brain, won by Ziba's strategy, refused to throw off the yoke of bondage to her lover's mandates.

A feverish desire to go quickly and shake herself free of remorse, possessed the harassed mind.

"You mustn't be morbid, father," she said. "If I had married Basil, I should have left you just the same; you know you were quite resigned to that."

The tension of those last words was interrupted by Mrs. Abbott bustling in, dressed for departure.

"We must go in good time for the train," she said; "I don't like being rushed with luggage. You had better see if all your things are collected downstairs; the carrier will be here directly."

As Jacinth readily caught at the suggestion, Mrs. Abbott turned a commiserating gaze upon her husband.

"I do hope you will be all right during my

absence," she sighed. "I can't bear leaving you, but Anna is a good little maid, and promises to follow all my instructions. You have plenty of books to keep you occupied, so perhaps the time won't seem so long. Now, don't fret about Jacinth; she is a very lucky girl."

Mr. Abbott pulled himself together for the sake of his ever-anxious wife. He assured her he did not fear being left to Anna's tender mercies, adding he would appreciate his dear one's loving attentions all the more afterwards.

The moments were slipping away, and now the good-bye was hurried. A feverish kiss exchanged between father and child, and a heartily whispered "God bless you" from the man, constituted the final words. Then Jacinth passed quickly under the porch to where the bushes of sweet briar were brightened by morning sunbeams. The two figures turned towards the station, Jacinth only once glancing back at the little homestead she was abandoning for ever.

"It was here Ziba and I walked in the moonlight," she thought. "He said I should feel his presence again. He is with me now. His spirit leads me by the hand."

She knew she must have turned back but for that influence.

The stir of the platform helped to dispel painful recollections of her father's ashen features.

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Mrs. Abbott bought a daily paper and the parochial magazine, always unwelcome to Jacinth's eyes, since it attacked Mormonism.

They were fortunate in getting a carriage to themselves, and now Mrs. Abbott appeared quite inclined to enjoy the little jaunt.

"I am sure," she said, "Mrs. Wilberforce is so kind that she will be indulgent where holidays are concerned. Already your father and I have been counting the months to your return. Really, to see his face, you might be leaving for a stretch of years. Foreign travel will brisk you up and knock out of your head, I hope, any Mormon ideas which may still linger there."

She glanced at her daily paper, and her eye fell on the words, "Mormon proselytism in England."

"I am glad to see," she continued, "there has been a protest meeting at Winchester, consequent on the visit of Mormon Elders. A resolution was forwarded to the Home Secretary, while the member for that city urged steps should be taken to prevent their propaganda. One of our leading judges declared that Mormonism was 'a creepy disease covered with a thin veil of blasphemous so-called religion.' Another citizen, not afraid of his own opinions, proclaimed his willingness to head a body of men to kick the Elders out of the city if they returned from Portsmouth."

Mrs. Abbott's voice grew shriller as she gave forth this information, aware that Jacinth's cheeks reddened with a rising flush of annoyance.

"You won't believe, mother," she protested, "that polygamy has been abolished in Utah, and everywhere else, so far as the Mormon Church is concerned. No such marriages have taken place since the acceptance of the manifesto or resolution giving up plural unions on October 6th, 1890."

Mrs. Abbott's heart sank at hearing her daughter defend a faith she had so evidently closely studied. Too hurt to reply, she turned to her parish magazine. Here again the Mormon controversy stared her in the face. She seemed haunted by perpetual reminders of its heinous offences.

"Shocking!" she murmured under her breath. "Oh, the poor father!"

Jacinth's curiosity was aroused.

"What are you reading?" she asked. "Any more lies about those well-meaning people?"

Mrs. Abbott gladly furnished information.

"An unfortunate father writes that his two daughters, aged eighteen and twenty, went against his protests from Riverpool *en route* to Utah, under the escort of some of your precious elders. They obtained funds for the journey forwarded from Heber City, Utah, to a president here. It was a sickening sorrow to their parents to see these young daughters led astray. Another girl also succumbed

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to the persuasions of Mormon agents, and in order to deceive her father, was placed in a side room during their meetings to prevent him hearing of her attendance. She lost all interest in friends and home directly she joined the Mormons, and was dismissed by her employer for negligence. Then came the shocking sequel. The Elder who converted her, though a married man with a family, took her to theatres and entertainments, detaining her till late at night. Finally he persuaded her to accompany him to Utah, where she is now living under his roof."

"I cannot help what others do," replied Jacinth with a toss of her head. "Those people were free agents, I suppose, and at liberty to mould their lives on their own religious convictions. I tell you, mother, that I know these Mormons do not live in violation of God's law. I have this at first hand. You quote your bit of piecemeal testimony, but I should like to know who vouches for the truth of what you have read."

Mrs. Abbott was growing distinctly angry.

"The leading clergy of Riverpool are no liars," she said. "Like yourself, the infuriated Mormons have accused our good pastors of falsehood, a charge met by a definite substantiation of every statement made. Why, the figures are given here," shaking the magazine in Jacinth's face. "A representative Mormon admitted in 1900 that there were

then 1,543 polygamous families—that is, at least, 4,629 Mormons living in polygamy. This, if you please, was ten years after the manifesto which we are told abolished such unions. These appalling admissions should convince even such a champion as yourself. The very president who poured contempt on the statement that Mormons were still polygamists and accused one of our clergymen of ‘belabouring the ghost of a departed practice,’ had himself at least two wives when he penned those words for the Riverpool press.”

Jacinth closed her eyes. Inwardly she assured herself the devil worked hard, now her feet were planted on the path of glory. She would shut her ears to these unworthy attacks, and believe Ziba the miracle-worker, before all the world.

After a pause, in which Mrs. Abbott had put aside her magazine, the girl added in a lenient voice—

“Don’t let us wrangle now, our time together is so short. It would be kinder not to take that paper back for father to read, he is so easily agitated. I hope he may be feeling happier now. I am afraid our going tried him sorely.”

Jacinth pictured the lonely man, feeling she might never look again upon that thin, bedridden figure. The thought held sorrow, brightened only by a vision of Ziba’s face, like a radiant angel calling her to the higher life.

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Left alone. Hugh Abbott lay for a time absolutely impassive. The springs of his being felt frozen, he tried not to realize Jacinth had actually gone. Half dozing for a time, he suddenly woke to the full consciousness of some awful apprehension. Until this moment he had never believed in premonition. Fiercely he assured himself there was nothing uncanny in the straightforward, earthly Mrs. Wilberforce, with her solid air of affluence.

A confused feeling seized his brain that this parting with Jacinth was an everlasting severance, of which he had been warned in a state of former existence. During this deeply painful reverie, which covered him as a cloud, he foresaw a future of paralysing misery. This illusion was complete with the atmosphere of a prophetic vision. He pictured Jacinth surrounded by enemies, men and women, whose evil ideas were oddly visible to the seer. Hugh Abbott's materialistic surroundings were completely obliterated by this waking dream. He heard Jacinth's voice crying loudly for help, he watched her beating her hands on a blank unresponsive wall. She was alone with some nameless terror, cut off from friends and kindred. He knew he was reading the future like an open book, given the power of second sight by some unknown supernatural force, left unsolved even by the wisdom of the twentieth century. Jacinth appeared in the company of Death, then the vapour lifted, and, gasping

in actual physical agony, the startled brain crept back to its normal state.

Nothing could logically account for this amazing presentiment, the fruit of his subconscious mind. Great drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead, and the loneliness of the small room became intolerable. Was it likely that some astral part of his understanding had foreshadowed the future? Inwardly he declared it was palpably impossible. The terror of the brain began to work some marked change in his useless limbs, they tingled with a desire to move, and quivered like rocking boughs on a wind-swept tree.

"If I could walk again," he gasped, "if I could but follow Jacinth. Oh, God! for strength!" His nerves were stirred with a desire to move, he lay contemplating the possibility of carrying out his physician's hopes.

"If my child were in danger," he thought, "I might be given the sudden power for which I have yearned so ardently. That ghastly vision of fear and horror did not come for nothing. It portends some disaster to our family, and so far as Jacinth is concerned, I shall not have an easy moment till I see her back in Riverpool. Fool that I was to let her go. Even our Mormon-ridden city was perhaps safer than an unknown home in foreign lands. Possibly we took too much for granted, because Mrs. Wilberforce seemed rich, and carried all before her."

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A desperate desire for action brought a bold idea to the distracted father. At any cost he would summon Jacinth back, and be guided by the mysterious warning, too powerful to overlook. There would yet be time to send a telegram to meet the train at Euston. Of course there was the likelihood, with the outpouring crowd, that the messenger calling the name "Abbott" up and down the platform might not attract his wife's attention. But even one chance in a thousand was worth the trying.

He rang for Anna, telling her to bring him a telegraph form, on which he wrote:—

"At all hazards prevent Jacinth going with Mrs. Wilberforce. Insist on her returning here.—Hugh."

"Run as fast as you can with this telegram," he told the willing little maid. "I want it to go without a moment's delay."

Anna read the words as she tore down the road.

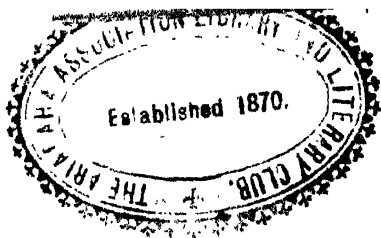
"My goodness! what will they both say?" she thought. "The master must have taken leave of his senses. He certainly looked scared to death, but nothing has happened, no letter, no message, no caller."

Breathlessly Hugh Abbott timed Anna until her return, then he commended her swiftness with a sigh of relief.

The intuition still remained dominant; he could not wipe it from his mind.

"Jacinth will never forgive me," he thought, "but I don't care; she may think I stood in her light, but that is immaterial. The cry I heard was distinctly her own voice, and no mere superstitious fancy. She is too weak to be trusted alone; Heaven knows why this did not strike me sooner."

Meanwhile the train sped on to the great metropolis, while Jacinth and her mother little dreamt those peremptory words had been sent in advance to Euston Station. As the engine steamed in, Mrs. Wilberforce, a tall, important figure, stood eyeing the long line of compartments, seeking the third-class carriage which brought Ziba's bride to the crowded city of unknown deeds.



CHAPTER XIII

CAUGHT IN THE TRAP

HESTER'S heart sank as she watched Jacinth spring out upon the platform. The girl's beauty made her painfully conscious of age. Youth seemed to wither before the fresh charm of this newcomer. In the hardened school of Mormonism she had become like a human machine. Until this hour the thought of rebellion had never entered her mind. She worked with religious fervour, believing her eternal salvation lay in the hands of hard taskmasters. Fiercely she wondered if Ziba really felt a thrill of amorous passion for the girl who, like many another, he had bewitched as a convert to Mormonism.

Directly Jacinth's eyes discovered her in the crowd, Hester forced a welcoming smile for the benefit of Mrs. Abbott.

"I hope that you and your dear daughter have had a good journey," she said pleasantly. "You are indeed a model mother to chaperone Miss Abbott thus far. I, like yourself, strongly object to young

girls travelling alone. Feel assured she will be absolutely safe under my wing."

Her own hypocritical words relieved the rising annoyance in Hester's mind. She knew this future, so-called, wife would soon grow to loathe the doctrines which had soured the older woman's soul. In time Jacinth's pensive grace and beauty must fade beneath the blight of vice and deception. When she found herself ruined body and soul, abhorred by the virtuous, pitied by the pure, she would consent to hide her shame beneath the yoke of labour awaiting her in Mormon fields.

"She will have to work in time for her bread like other plural wives," thought Hester gloatingly. "Her spiritual husband has little pity for those whose looks are perishing. Ziba will tire of her eventually. At any rate she shall never usurp my place."

Hester had always relied on her own cleverness and strong brain power which assisted Ziba in his machinations. She knew he leant on her, appreciating those dramatic talents by which she hoodwinked the simple. Her strong hand had aided him in the upbringing of his many children, whom he termed "the off-spring of the faithful." She instructed them in the principles and duties of the creed, while her own propaganda brought much grist to the mill. No one knew better how to tighten the reins than this domineering woman of the world.

Those beneath her care realized their very thoughts were under a secret surveillance. She could gloss over with sugared phrases a system of abominations bred of earlier Mormon days when actual physical torture was practised. Her mother could remember when women were stripped, bound, and scourged till the blood ran from their wounds, a penalty enacted for even speaking against polygamy. In those days this was a frequent occurrence, and a state of constant apprehension preyed on the nerves of the female population.

Many discontented wives vanished mysteriously, their friends being told that Satan had borne them bodily away for sinful presumption in breathing heresy against their glorious lot with God's elect. One of these unfortunates had actually endured the searing of her mouth and tongue with red-hot irons, husbands possessing unlimited discretion in the chastisement of their weaker halves.

All these thoughts flashed through Hester's mind, as she bade Jacinth follow her to a taxicab.

"Mr. Wilberforce was using the carriage," declared the supposed Mrs. Wilberforce. "I am rather in a hurry, as we are expecting company. Now, porter, make haste with that luggage. Tell the driver to take us to the *Grand Hotel*, Trafalgar Square."

She offered her hand to Mrs. Abbott in a friendly shake of farewell.

"We leave for Germany to-morrow," she said, "sleeping to-night at the hotel, which has been our residence while in London. Please remember me to your husband, I liked him so much."

Mrs. Abbott blinked back her tears as Jacinth bent forward for a good-bye kiss.

"Heaven be with you, my darling child," she whispered; "write often, you know what your letters will mean to us at home."

The girl could not reply, for now she choked back a rising sob. The crowded London terminus, the stern Hester Wayne, made her realize the actuality of this long severance from deluded parents.

"In time," thought Jacinth, "they may grow to love Ziba; it is too late to turn back now."

Mrs. Wilberforce half pushed her into the vehicle, made a sign to the driver, and nothing was left to Mrs. Abbott but the sight of a waving hand through the open window. The mother, blinded by tears, did not notice two men, who had concealed themselves, jump into another taxi, bidding the driver follow in Jacinth's wake.

Mrs. Abbott turned away, sighing deeply as she wiped her eyes. Just at that moment she caught the sound of her own name being shouted up and down the platform. She followed the boy, seeing a telegram in his hand. A sickening sensation of suspense, almost paralysed speech, as she arrested

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him with the murmured assertion that she was "Mrs. Abbott."

"Hugh must be taken ill," she thought. "The telegram can contain nothing but bad news if it is really for me."

"Are you a passenger from Riverpool?" asked the boy.

Nodding assent, she snatched the envelope from his hand.

Staring at the message, a feeling of bewilderment overcame her; for a moment she feared she might sink to the ground, so terrified and perplexed were her senses.

At first she wondered whether Hugh's mind had become unhinged by the sorrow he felt at losing his daughter, and his inborn fear of Mormon elders. Possibly he had heard through some unexpected source that Mrs. Wilberforce was not a fit person for Jacinth to associate with. Mr. Panmore, always kind and considerate, might have found out some unpleasant details with regard to the situation. How terrible if Jacinth went to Germany in the care of a bad character!

The mother's thoughts travelled quickly.

"Thank Heaven," she murmured, "there is yet time. I can go to the *Grand Hotel*, and plead the excuse that her father's health demands Jacinth's immediate return. Of course I can show her the telegram privately, without divulging its contents

to Mrs. Wilberforce. The boxes will not even be unpacked, and any objection can be met with the hope that Jacinth may follow later, if her father can spare her."

The money loss was obliterated in Mrs. Abbott's mind by far more serious considerations. Being ignorant of her way, she decided to take a cab, after first despatching a return wire to her worried husband.

"Cheer up," she wrote; "on my way to fetch Jacinth back."

"That will set his mind at rest," she thought. "I hope he has good ground for this step. If it is only an attack of nerves we shall indeed look ridiculous."

It seemed a long drive from Euston to Trafalgar Square, since the moments were fraught with maternal anxiety. Mrs. Abbott felt bewildered as she made her way to the inquiry office.

On asking for Mrs. Wilberforce, the attendant told her no one of that name was staying in the hotel.

She felt angry rather than frightened, regarding him as stupidly ignorant.

"I am sorry to contradict you," she said decidedly, "but I happen to know Mrs. Wilberforce is here. She has booked a room for my daughter, Miss Abbott, previous to leaving for Germany."

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The man called a second opinion, together they assured her she was labouring under a mistake, suggesting, if she still doubted, that she should inquire at the compartment where rooms are booked.

Mrs. Abbott hastened to the bureau intimated by her two advisers. There she was convinced, after viewing the visitors' book, that no one named Wilberforce had applied for apartments.

"Is there any other *Grand Hotel* in Trafalgar Square?" she asked, turning deadly white, and clutching at the table for support. "I fear my daughter may be the victim of some trick. Mrs. Wilberforce said she was coming here, and directly the girl left, a telegram came warning me against this woman. Oh! what would you advise me to do? I am a total stranger in London."

Her listener was immediately sympathetic. The sight of her strained face and agonized eyes appealed to him forcibly.

"If the young lady has been snared away for any evil purpose, I should recommend you to put the matter in the hands of Scotland Yard."

"I would not dare without first consulting my husband," gasped Mrs. Abbott, who cherished a deep-rooted fear of police investigation. "Besides," she added, "my suspicions may be wrong. Perhaps Mrs. Wilberforce has stopped to do some shopping—she was in a hurry, and might yet arrive. I

must try not to lose my head, though it is all very alarming."

The clerk invited her to wait as long as she liked in the hotel, promising to summon her directly if Mrs. Wilberforce arrived.

For a long time the distracted mother sat in the hall watching the swing-door, then, fully convinced something was seriously wrong, decided to return by the next possible train to Liverpool, and inform her husband of this mysterious occurrence.

Meanwhile Hester Wayne, after driving a short distance, gave fresh orders.

"I do not want to go to the *Grand Hotel*," she told the man, giving the address in South Tottenham of Elvaston House.

"I think we put your mother off the scent," she declared with a smile of satisfaction; "all has been most neatly managed, and I hope we shall have no repining on your part, now that your life will be one of praise and song."

She had noticed the look of sorrow on Jacinth's face at parting with Mrs. Abbott. Her charge brightened visibly at the words.

"No, I must not fret, since I am joining my beloved Ziba; he will be waiting for me, won't he, at Elvaston House? I deeply regretted we could not travel together, for I grudge every moment spent out of his sight."

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"You are strangely infatuated for a twentieth-century girl," declared Hester with a sneer, "quite an old-fashioned love match, it seems."

"Oh, yes!" retorted Jacinth warmly. "How can I help loving him when he adores me so? He tells me I am the only woman who has ever stirred him to this passionate devotion, unusual perhaps in one sealed to heavenly worship."

As Hester listened she thrust her hands in her pockets, clenching her fists in their black kid gloves. She would like to have struck Jacinth in the mouth. Was it possible Ziba had really uttered such words, turning with flattery the foolish head of this pink and white doll? Hester was not blind to the power of beauty. What if the girl's fairness should place her above an older, superior intellect? Men's passions could never be accounted for. Ziba had used women for his pleasure, never really loving those who were forced to work in the fields, when his momentary joy in them had abated.

"I fear," said Hester, "that the vanities of the world may lead you from the straight path. The way you dress your hair is not quite seemly for a Saint's bride. These wayward curls suggest a frivolous woman. Why not brush back your locks and lay them low with some grease I can give you from my toilet store? Ziba does not admire luxuriant tresses, he says they are a snare, and revolt his fastidious taste."

Jacinth felt her colour deepening. She remembered Ziba had hinted his sister was jealous.

"Indeed you are wrong," she cried, controlling her voice. "It happens Ziba has already seen my hair down, and simply gloried in its ripples. He ran his fingers through them, and buffed his face in my curls. That was the night he said he was sick with love, and thirsted for my presence. He likened me to a moonbeam, and called me the elixir of all his desire. I should not like to spoil such a poetical impression. It is very kind of you to offer me the grease. I hope I do not appear ungrateful. You cannot imagine how blessed I felt when he swore that his life's love-story lay in my hands, and that I was chained to his soul. I dare say you know we are going to be married in London: Ziba simply cannot wait until we arrive in Utah."

Hester had so upset the unguarded bride-elect that Elder Wayne's warning words were momentarily forgotten. Instead of trying to soothe jealousy Jacinth fanned the flame, indignant that his sister should seek to make her less attractive.

Hester set her lips, biting them until they nearly bled. For the first time in her life a mad desire seized her to reveal to an unbaptized novice all that lay in store for one sealed to a Mormon Elder. How graphically Hester Wayne could have described the sensuality of the much-married Saints, whose secret unions were often little dreamt of by fresh, unsophis-

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ticated brides ! Very easily she could have planted a thousand indefinable suspicions and haunting fears in Jacinth's heart. She knew, even now, the English girl would turn back revolted, could she realize that Ziba's existence was one of licentious gratification. This outward paragon, really a sink of iniquity, regarded polygamy as the greatest earthly blessing.

"It is a mistake to rate men too highly," Hester declared, still loth to take the formidable step which must sever her eternally from the faith in which she was born. "How would you feel if your husband tired of you ? Remember there is savage blood in the veins of some of our men. In early days they vanquished their enemies by trickery. The Lord revealed it to them, that whole parties of unbelievers should be misled by Mormon guides in the mountain fastnesses when first our holy company amalgamated. Many unregenerated souls were starved to death among icy pinnacles, reduced to feeding on the flesh of their dead wives, while ravenous mothers feasted on the mangled bodies of their own children. Those righteous souls who cut off the travellers from reaching safety rejoiced, gloried, and exulted in this just persecution, knowing it was the will of heaven that the wanderers should perish."

Jacinth's eyes widened as she listened, and a dumb horror of Hester turned her momentarily faint.

"Why do you tell me these hateful details?" she asked. "Our Old Testament relates many terrible occurrences, but we do not dwell on them with pleasure. Ziba always speaks of the kindness shown by Mormons to every newcomer. It almost seems as if you were setting me against your own people."

As she spoke the cab drew up at Elvaston House, and the green-painted windows struck Jacinth as peculiarly dreary, since they obliterated all outward view.

"Ziba will be here," the girl repeated again. "He left Riverpool yesterday, and promised to greet me on the threshold."

As Hester paid the fare she answered sourly—

"I told him you would not be here till an hour or two later. I thought you would like time to settle in. Besides, too much excitement is not advisable, since you will be baptized to-morrow. Earthly considerations should be laid aside, and all love-making abandoned for the moment."

Jacinth's face fell as she entered the cold, bare hall. Nothing homely or bright in this house of gloom, which somehow bore the air of a prison; its very atmosphere seemed redolent of regrets.

As the heavy door closed with a bang on Jacinth's youthful figure, a taxi drew up a few paces distant, and Basil Hope, accompanied by Carson, alighted on the pavement.

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"Is that a private residence?" Carson inquired of a policeman.

The man shook his head.

"No, sir; it's a Mormon house, where lots of young girls go before they start to America."

Basil drew a deep breath. For a moment he appeared too staggered to speak. Up to now he had hoped Jacinth might really be going to a respectable situation.

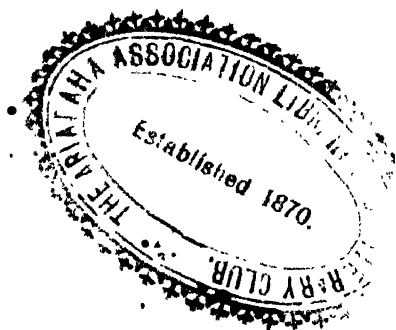
Carson asked a few more questions, finding the policeman utterly ignorant of Mormon tactics, having never heard that these people were a polygamous sect.

"It's no good trying to get her away immediately," Carson assured the now rampant lover. "She would only defy you. Wait until she has had a taste of Mormon treatment; she may discover something she does not like in a very short time. I will think of a plan for communicating with her. You may be sure all letters will be read and stopped."

"It would kill Mr. Abbott if he knew," declared Basil, his heart aching for the girl's parents. "Thank goodness, they suspect nothing. At least they are spared the suspense I must now endure. I should like to go and kick down that door, and raid the place of every living soul."

"Not a bad idea," said Carson. "Old English methods; there's too much of the red tape milksop nowadays. Mormons would soon clear out if our

young Britishers showed fight. It may rest with you to show the way. Only violent measures will open the eyes of our leading politicians, and make the Mormon scandal a Government affair."



CHAPTER XIV

THE GATHERED SHEAF

JACINTH felt bitterly disappointed that Hester prevented Ziba from greeting her on arrival. Instinctively she knew this woman was an enemy, resolving not to be guided by her in any way.

"You will be glad to come up to your room," said the unsmiling Hester. "I have selected one which leads out of mine. I promised your mother to keep you well under my eye."

The proposed proximity was distasteful to the newcomer. It seemed to convey Hester did not trust her future sister-in-law, and wished to exercise a rigid surveillance.

"I will show you my apartment first," declared Miss Wayne, ushering the girl into a lofty chamber papered with drab-coloured flowers. The canopy of the four-poster double bed supported hangings of coarse mustard-hued moreen, faded by age. The furniture, uncompromisingly simple, gave a bare effect to this sombre, unlovely room. A cheerless note was emphasized by the absence of a fireplace, while one dingy gas jet showed that the more modern electric light was not a feature of Elvaston House. Facing the bed a deal bookcase held an ample supply

of Mormon literature, while the only ornament consisted of a large photograph representing Ziba in clerical attire.

As Jacinth looked round, her eyes fell suddenly on a strange stain in the carpet. Hester appeared immediately conscious that her young guest had observed the dull, red mark.

"Yes, it looks like blood, doesn't it?" she said, realizing how glad she would be if Jacinth were frightened away before Ziba arrived to further enthrall her with passionate love-making. "We had a girl here, just about your age, who took a violent dislike to Mormonism after she was baptized. Of course, had she wanted to leave before she became one of us, we could have said nothing. Like you, now, she might have walked out of the house unquestioned. But after conversion we had a right to detain her. One of our Elders interviewed the young rebel in this very room, hoping to wrestle with her refractory spirit. I remember what a noise they made as she tried to fight her way out. It appears once before she had broken a blood vessel, and the unfortunate symptoms reappeared, with the result, my carpet was spoilt."

As Jacinth listened, she thought how palpably this jealous woman was trying to drive her forth by suggested terrors, before Ziba arrived to dispel the sense of gloom.

Not replying, Jacinth went to the small dressing-

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room prepared for her use. It was meanly equipped, like the apartment of the poorest servant girl. Not even a carpet of the cheapest kind sheltered those bare boards on which she must tread.

"Ziba wanted you to sleep on another floor in a more luxurious room, but I persuaded him to let me have you near for the sake of propriety. You have set your feet on the paths of saintliness, so must not lean towards earthly comfort. The cells of monks, whose lives are given to prayer, are not so well furnished as this little room. I trust you will not complain to Ziba, seeing our hospitality is freely given, no charge being made to novices who feed upon our charity."

Tears rose to Jacinth's eyes, she tried to battle down a rising fury, lashed to life by Hester's cutting words.

"I thought," she stammered, "I was invited as a welcome guest, seeing I am your future sister-in-law. I feel sure Ziba would not like you to say such things to me. As far as the room goes, I do not mind where I sleep for a few days. I shall be married and away almost directly."

She closed the door on Hester and deliberately turned the key. She dared not trust herself to say another word, only the sound of a mocking laugh from the older woman added to the stranger's temporary annoyance.

In order to divert her thoughts Jacinth began to

quickly unpack, taking from her handbag a small travelling clock. As she placed it on the dressing-table its cheerful ticking reminded her of home. She could not deny this room also held a weird influence. Did the girl sleep there who fought for freedom? Had her misery possibly affected the cramping walls? Suddenly the mysterious chamber became oddly silent. Looking towards her table, she noted the ever-regular and trustworthy time-piece had unaccountably stopped. Startled by the occurrence, which appeared to demonstrate that the room was uncanny, Jacinth examined the mechanism, finding it fully wound. At that moment she heard Hester tapping on her door.

"Ziba has returned earlier than I expected. He requests you to go down immediately. Don't be hours decorating yourself. He is too busy a man to be kept waiting."

Jacinth experienced a thrill of delight. Suddenly the clouds rose, now all would be well. She needed no second bidding, but running out on the landing, asked where she should find Ziba.

Hester conducted her below, preceding her into an apartment which had the air of a parish room. The long table in the centre, with sunken ink-pots, suggested meetings, while a number of plain wooden chairs stood in line, with their backs to the wall. A smell of stale tobacco advertised that the Elders were not above the allurements of nicotine.

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Though Ziba held out a welcoming hand, it was palpable to Jacinth that Hester's presence bred in him a constrained manner.

"I wish to be alone for awhile with this lamb who has newly entered our pastoral fold," he murmured, addressing his grim-faced relative. "Leave us, dear sister. This is one of the sheaves I have gathered up for Zion. We have many arrangements to make ere we start for Utah. Be sure I shall seek your counsel, which has always proved so helpful."

He patted Hester on the shoulder with a conciliatory touch. "Rejoice," he added, "that this child has received the revelation, and in future her feet shall be set upon a rock. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

With her head raised, Hester sailed from the room without replying.

No sooner had she left, than Ziba opened his arms for Jacinth to fly into, a white, troubled bride-elect, eager to pour out her grievances.

"Oh, why were you not here to meet me?" she cried. "Hester seems so bitter; I cannot make her out at all. She tried to frighten me away, but I felt it would be all right once you came."

He frowned, as he softly stroked Jacinth's cheek, inwardly cursing the interfering Hester.

"I told you, my darling, a great sin has fallen on her soul, that of unreasonable jealousy. In reality it is a high compliment to your peerless beauty.

She knows I worship at the shrine of my Jacinth's pure being. Suffer her little pin-pricks for expediency's sake. To-morrow you will be given fresh spiritual strength through baptism and the laying on of hands, agreeable to the covenants and commandments of the Church. The hands are a necessary part of our organic structure. You will receive the gift of grace from an Elder holding the Melchisedek priesthood. His right to sanctify you is divinely imposed. As my wife, you will meet many inspired persons who work in the ministry preaching our Gospel, conducting foreigners and strangers into the Commonwealth of Israel. Know, once for all, that the Mormon Church is right, and every other religion wrong. All Latter-Day Saints must be in exact accord with the prescribed pattern of our heaven-sent company. Your beauty shall amaze my brethren, who consist of evangelists, pastors, teachers, and deacons. Hester is not only jealous of your personal charms, but of my rare mental endowments. Perhaps you do not know that in Utah I am one of the idols of the Reorganized Church. If Hester grows more belligerent, I shall begin to think there is a devil in her, which must be cast out. I have in my time exorcised from human beings very genuine, real, alive devils. His Satanic Majesty is not a pleasant foe to wrestle with. Some of his satellites persistently refuse to be expelled. Only like Stephen, full of faith and power, do I work

great wonders and miracles among our Mormon people. My life is such an example that I have been made an overseer to feed the Church of God. I set in order many things that are wanting, as only a blameless steward can. My mouth is full of sound doctrine, by which I exhort and convince the gainsayers. You will find I am a man given to hospitality, vigilant, sober, not greedy of filthy lucre, or given to much wine. By the way, child, talking of money, have you brought your savings, which must form a baptismal offering to-morrow ? ”

He was wielding his old spell over the already hypnotized mind. The stern realities of life were slipping away so far as Jacinth was concerned. He wafted her to a blissful fairy land in which sorrow and weeping were unknown. The bitter in the sweet of existence faded before visions of dazzling brightness. For the merest dross the girl's clouded eyes perceived pure gold. No rust tarnished the magic setting Ziba brought into flimsy being. The bare room, for Jacinth, was diffused with heaven's refreshing sunlight. She could not know she was fast bound in a prison of falsehood and deception. Ziba, well aware the girl was totally captivated, listened with pleasure as she told him the amount of her savings, now at his disposal. Beneath his kisses she little dreamt there ran an undercurrent of wicked cunning and deep-laid imposition rising from a false faith, the most insidious ever palmed upon a credulous world.

"We cannot sit in with Hester to-night," said Ziba, consulting his watch. "I advised you to bring a white frock to wear on your baptismal day. I should like you to don it this evening and come out with me for some hours' relaxation. We will have a pleasant little dinner together at a not too expensive restaurant. What play would you like to see? Perhaps a Shakespearean drama would be the most fitting, as you are nearing a holy rite."

Jacinth looked absolutely amazed. Nothing had been further from her thoughts than the possibility of any worldly dissipation. She remembered her shocked feeling at Maggie Piper's words, yet, surely, nothing Ziba suggested could be wrong.

"It sounds delightful," she stammered, her head swimming from the excitement of fierce kisses burning on her lips. "But are you quite sure we ought to go to a place of amusement? I had resolved to give up all such pleasures when I knew I should be linked to a Saint."

He laughed away her fears gaily.

"Dearest," he said, "you have repented of all your former sins, and it is a heavenly edict that when you are baptized you must become as a little child. Children do not question the right or wrong of plans laid down for them by older and wiser minds. You must be dumb as a sheep before her shearers. I could prescribe nothing that would injure your soul."

Soothed by this assurance, Jacinth, at his bidding,

hastened to change her travelling attire. The dress which Mrs. Abbott fondly believed was for evening wear at the Rhine castle, looked particularly dainty as Jacinth laid it on the truckle bed. It seemed out of keeping with this poverty-stricken room. She had brought ribbons for her hair, some simple jewellery, and a new pair of bright-buckled shoes. Jacinth recalled how she had prayed over this dress at Briar Cottage, investing it with sanctity. No sooner was she adorned for the un contemplated outing, than Hester burst in without knocking, regarding with blazing eyes the girlish form in its becoming garb.

"So it is true," she said, "you have already, with your loose ideas, inveigled my brother into an ungodly indiscretion. He tells me he is about to fête you this evening, an unprecedented occurrence for a newly-arrived convert."

Jacinth, hardened now to such attacks, had a ready answer.

"It is different for us, being engaged," she retorted, as she put the finishing touches to her toilette. "Besides, I do not think you speak truthfully when you call it unprecedented. Maggie Piper most certainly told me she was to see something of London life with her intended bridegroom before leaving Elvaston House for Utah. Why if it were right for her should it be wrong for me?"

This time Hester could find no suitable reply.

She closed the door, shutting out that fair, white vision, and grasping the bedpost, fastened her teeth on the wooden knob.

"Oh, God ! help me to be silent," she cried ; " I have borne it in the past, and I must bear it again. For once the Mormon yoke seems heavier than I can endure."

She did not appear again, afraid to face Ziba lest some burning truths should pour from her lips.

"That girl, with her angel face, will gain dominion over him," Hester groaned under her breath. "Then my star will set, my power die. I, myself, had better first be dead."



CHAPTER XV

THE PLAY'S THE THING

JACINTH hurried down to Ziba, rewarded for the trouble she had taken over her attire by the man's admiring smile.

"I shall be proud to escort such a dainty fairy," he declared; "you will cause quite a stir in the restaurant with your fresh, natural bloom, so seldom seen in London. The way you have dressed your hair is perfection. Those curls peeping through the neatly entwined ribbon, show me you lean to the artistic. Later on I will give you some lovely dresses; you shall be the reigning belle of Utah."

Jacintb recalled Hester's criticisms, thinking how far they were from the mark. She would not pain Ziba by a repetition of his sister's stinging words. To-night they must only remember themselves, obliterating all discordant notes. She did not allow herself to think of Mr. and Mrs. Abbott, fondly picturing her in the unexciting position of governess. How far better to be a promised bride, enjoying the sweets of a festive evening with the man of her choice! She felt deliriously happy as they drove

to the restaurant selected by Ziba. It was brightly illuminated with electric lights reflected in numerous looking-glasses, which enlarged an otherwise not too spacious room. Most of the tables were already occupied, and as the proprietor led them to a sheltered nook by an overspreading palm, Jacinth was conscious her beauty had the prophesied effect on his clientèle. Women, as well as men, devoured her with their eyes, whispering comments on the white robed figure.

Ziba felt elated at the thought she was all his own, congratulating himself upon winning, not only a simple, trustful soul, but a veritable belle, who would wake envy in the hearts of his less fortunate brethren.

"I saw she was a flower worthy of my plucking when first I gathered her on the roadside at Riverpool," he thought, as they settled themselves at a table for two.

"Sit here where the people can see you," he whispered. "I have not often had the opportunity of taking such a pretty girl about."

Jacinth blushed as she obeyed, delighted to feel Ziba was satisfied. She had no wish to gaze around upon the assembled throng of diners, she only sought her lover's face with large adoring eyes. None could fail to observe this couple were in love. They carried their story in radiant smiles, Ziba making no effort to conceal his attentive manner in public.

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Enthusiastically he started an animated conversation.

"However dramatic the play may prove to-night, it cannot equal the wonderful Mormon dramas which take place at the Endowment House in Utah when candidates present themselves for initiation. You must pass through those scenes of wonder with me when you are my wife. Our people are great actors, and you will see a play there which will open your eyes to real histrionic talent."

"What do they do?" asked Jacinth, puzzled that acting should be connected with religion.

"Oh! many startling and entertaining things," answered Ziba with a smile. "After you have been washed by a woman attendant you will join me, and we shall behold the grand council of the gods. A blank verse drama is intoned by figures representing Michael, Eloheim, and Jehovah. At the close of this a responsive chorus breaks out, then Jehovah says:—

"Let us make man in image, form, and likeness as our own."

"Simultaneously the new candidates have been laid on the floor, the attendants closing all novices' eyes. Then enter the gods, and manipulate these prostrate ones, limb by limb, notifying the use of each member, and feigning to mould them afresh. Sharply they strike them to indicate the power of creation. After they have had the breath of life

blown into their nostrils by these mummer gods, they are raised to their feet—' As Adam, newly made, completely ductile, mobile in the Maker's hand.' You see, I quote the very words, for at one time I deigned, on special occasions, to be one of the *dramatis personæ*."

Jacinth listened excitedly as he filled her glass with champagne.

" You are at liberty to partake of this fluid to-night," he declared, " as a tonic after the fatigues of your journey."

He was trying, as he spoke, to hypnotize her into seeing vividly the play he loved to describe.

" What happens next ? " she asked, revealing he had captured her interest.

" Oh, many strange scenes, enacted in a chamber where rich curtains, gorgeous carpets, boxes of flowering shrubs, pictured mountains and painted fountains are delicately suffused by rays of heavenly light. Here Adam and Eve are seen partially unclothed. But for prejudice, they should be entirely stripped, as were our first parents. Unfortunately, even godly Mormon people are not yet sufficiently pure-minded to make this advisable. It might be used against us, so we err on the safe side. Our first parents are seen wandering in the Garden, where the devil appears, attired in knee breeches and short black velvet jacket, wearing a pointed helmet and satanic mask. He proffers temptation to Eve, and

she partakes of the fruit, giving it, as in the Bible, to the weak Adam. They clasp hands, becoming almost delirious from its effects, dancing around vivaciously until tired out they sink upon the ground. Behind a curtain the audience hear lamentations, a chorus of groans accompanied by the clashing of thunder."

Jacinth listened, feeling her appetite fade away. In fancy she actually beheld the blasphemous antics of these people, Ziba's power forcing them to appear sacred to the mind of the girl his love had bewitched.

"Eloheim then reappears," continued Ziba, "bespangled with brilliants and dazzling stripes of many hues. He pronounces a curse, taken word for word from the Scriptures, a curse upon the serpent. On hearing the words Satan staggers and drops on the ground, wriggling away with most fantastic contortions. Then Eve and Adam are duly anathematized also, and bemoaning their sinful fate, the lost ones rend their garments, beating their breasts with agonized hands."

"What is all this leading up to?" asked Jacinth.

"It is preliminary," Ziba answered quickly, "to the candidates (who are given small, white aprons covered with emblematical fig leaves) joining in a solemn oath repeated after Adam on their knees. They promise to submit themselves entirely to the will of the priesthood. Men swear they will marry no woman without the consent of the presidency of

the Church. After receiving a key-word and grip, the First Degree of the Aaronic Priesthood is conferred."

Jacinth no longer thought of the play in store for them that night, her whole mind became absorbed by Ziba's conversation. Vaguely she wondered if all this mummary could be right, so foreign to home ideas of spiritual development. Boldly she stated her views, realizing she must keep nothing back from Ziba now they were to be one.

"You see," she explained, to cover her heresy, "nothing of that kind is ever done in England. I do not know that I should like it. I would rather see acting in theatres; the idea of dressed-up people quoting Scripture, might surely be a little blasphemous."

Ziba started uncomfortably. Had he said too much? He had meant to describe the subsequent entrance of Peter, James, and John, who command the devil to depart in the name of the Holy Priesthood. He particularly delighted in the part where Satan hisses, foams, and rushes out, hotly pursued by the Apostle Peter.

"You are quite mistaken," he declared, and now his voice was stentorian. "The little play is a godly means by which Mormon leaders weld their converts into glorious unity. All is undertaken with a feeling of solemnity. Verily, my soul is somewhat troubled over you, dear Jacinth. Is it possible you are still

in an unenlightened condition? I would snatch you from the ranks of the fallen, lest you wander in darkness. Should you question any of our creed, the righteousness you seek after will be as filthy rags. Though outwardly fair, from head to foot, your body will contain unseen bruises, wounds, and putrefying sores."

Jacinth hastened to offer apology.

"You must not be angry," she murmured, touching his hand under cover of the cloth. "It is all so strange to me, and as your promised wife, I wished you to know exactly how I felt. Of course, I have not your wisdom and learning. I only desire to be guided by the truths you so ably expound."

Ziba looked mollified, but deep down in his heart a sensation of wrath still kindled the fires of his easily-roused temper.

"I wish you could have heard," he replied, "a sermon I preached in Utah on that notable text: 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' If you turn back now, my child, your soul will welter in that awful gulf. I only seek to make you faithful, and guard you from all false doctrine."

He drank a deep draught of champagne as he spoke.

"To-morrow," he added joyfully, "after your immersion at the public baths we have procured for our baptisms, you will see matters in a clearer light. I love you too deeply to let your soul howl in the

· sulphurous flames of hell through all eternity. You can understand how earnest our men are since I tell you that the initiates, when in a saved condition, take a solemn oath to avenge the death of our martyred Prophet, Joseph Smith. They unflinchingly promise to cherish hostility to the Government of the United States for the murder of that just man."

Ziba's eyes flashed as he spoke; but for the influence of the champagne he so seldom took, he would not have said so much.

He had always gloried in the fact that these Endowment House converts were absolved from all previous oaths of fealty. Even if they failed to overthrow the Government, at least they promised to teach their children the pursuance of that revenge, though outwardly the Church proclaims this oath to be annihilated.

Ziba gave no further details of the horrible blasphemies perpetrated in the Endowment House. Desert was on the table, and he was consulting his watch with regard to the time.

"I have paid for good seats," he said, "so we must not lose any of the play. We will take our coffee quickly, and be off when you have finished your grapes."

Though still blinded by love, Jacinth felt less happy when she left the restaurant. Ziba's wild talk still rang in her brain. She had a vision of the lightly-clad Adam and Eve making sport with

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a tempting devil in pantomimic mask, comparing such an orgy with the quiet services familiar at home. The thought of to-morrow's immersion was also somewhat terrifying, to one accustomed to the Church of England's baptismal font.

Another swift journey in a comfortable taxi gave her little time for reflection. The London theatre, viewed from their seats in the dress-circle, made a pleasing spectacle to unaccustomed eyes. Well-dressed women in stalls and boxes attracted Jacinth's admiration, and once the curtain rose she sat enthralled by the spell of the world's greatest poet.

This magnificently represented Shakespearean drama drew her out of herself. The fine acting stirred her emotions, making her grateful to Ziba as the giver of such a treat. How she wished her father could have shared this intellectual banquet! How much the sight of his fellow creatures would mean to the bedridden man!

During one of the intervals Ziba, who had now entirely forgiven Jacinth, whispered that his feverish love gave him an actual physical thirst. He must leave her to assuage that bodily craving, not adding that his enslavement to tobacco also called him from her side.

No sooner was she alone, than a man's figure from one of the back rows moved stealthily in her direction. The seat behind her was vacant, he slipped

into it unobserved by the girl gazing down on the smartly coiffured heads in the stalls.

Suddenly the stranger bent forward, addressing her in a quick whisper.

"You are in danger," he said breathlessly. "The man you are with, decoys young girls to Utah. I am a detective, here is my card. I am lodging in rooms exactly opposite Elvaston House. I followed you here to-night, hoping to get speech with you. If you are in any trouble, or detained against your will, tie this crimson handkerchief outside your window, and the house shall be raided at once. You may be in love with that man, but for mercy's sake do not discard my warning. Remember what I have said. Unless you want me, you will never see me again."

Speechless with amazement, Jacinth gazed helplessly into Carson's serious face. She tried to answer him, but her voice left her, for a moment she feared she would faint. No parental expostulations came with the same earnestness as the businesslike speech of this unknown detective. He forced the large silk handkerchief into her trembling hands, with the professional card which bore his calling as well as name.

Before she could even gasp out "Thank you," or pull herself together to speak in defence of Ziba, the unexpected intruder had slipped noiselessly away.

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Mechanically she concealed both card and handkerchief in a petticoat pocket, terrified lest Ziba's keen intuition should divine its presence. The very fact of keeping these trophies, appeared disloyal towards her future husband. She excused herself by saying he might notice their presence unless they were hidden, and his feelings would be hurt by the cruel attack. She hoped he would remain away some moments longer, that she might regain her self-control. The theatre with its sea of faces became a blurred mass. From head to foot she felt frozen and unreal. She clung to the seat to prevent herself from falling limply forward, a thousand vague suspicions beat upon her brain.

She would not let herself believe she had fallen into vain error. Ziba loved her, and had done his best to prove devotion by arranging this evening of dissipation. He was, perhaps, less godly than she had hoped, but she still clung to the memory of the dead child's resurrection, and Ziba's burning eloquence at Mormon meetings.

She failed to regain entire composure by the time his tall figure reseatd itself at her side.

"I hope I have not stayed away too long, little sweetheart," he whispered, pressing her arm.

Jacynth's white lips murmured she was all right alone.

"But you look so pale," he added, glancing at her critically. "I fear the heat of this building is

too much for you. Fan yourself with my programme."

Jacinth took it from him, glad to shield her ashen countenance.

"I turned slightly dizzy," she declared, "but I am better now. See, the curtain is rising, we must not talk."

How thankfully she welcomed this excuse for silence! The play no longer charmed her, the actors were mere puppets moving in a dream. Her brain was on fire with nameless dread, she saw only the face of that unknown man, holding a blood-red handkerchief rolled in a ball.

Fiercely she repeated an emphatic inward assurance: "I love Ziba, love him, trust him, adore him. He is my king, and can do no wrong. I stand pledged to the Mormon faith. There is no turning back."



CHAPTER XVI

THE CANDIDATE FOR BAPTISM

ZIBA did not notice Jacinth's silence as they drove back to South Tottenham after the play. He put it down to the natural fatigue of a long day.

"It is just possible," he said, "my sister may suggest you should do your share in the workrooms on the ground floor of Elvaston House, where we keep young women menially employed. Please understand that any such course would be derogatory to my future wife. You can say you have my permission to be excused, and refer to me if the matter is pressed. I wish your stay at Elvaston House to be one of absolute happiness. Some people think that engagement days are, if possible, even more entrancing than those of the honeymoon. Your memory must not be clouded by my sister's interference."

"Although my room is next to Miss Wayne's, I dare say we shall not see much of each other," replied Jacinth as she thanked him. "Already I have had occasion to lock her out,"

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In reality the girl's thoughts were far from Hester, she still smarted under the paralysing recollection of the detective's words. The presence of that unknown man had apparently snapped some mighty cord of power by which the hypnotist fettered her will. The whispered accusation that Ziba decoyed young girls to Utah filled her with vague alarm. She tried to think, in palliation of this statement, that Ziba was working for the good of their souls. His missionary propaganda would naturally give colour to such an idea. Despite the excuses made for him, a sudden chill laid icy fingers on her heart as he crushed her nearer to himself. Some of the magnetism was missing from that fierce embrace: she almost wished he would cease kissing her.

Jacinth's lack of response was misunderstood by this ardent lover.

"She is half fainting with ecstasy," he thought. "The wine of life is running hotly through her veins."

Tenderly he helped her to alight, and opened the door of Elvaston House with a key, fumbling for matches in the totally dark hall.

"I told Hester to leave the gas," he said in a tone of annoyance. "She seems bent on going against my wishes. I selected one of our most comfortable rooms for you to inhabit, but even this was altered, on the plea of strenuous propriety. I must put my foot down to-morrow and make a firm stand.

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I have never been thwarted in my life, and don't intend to begin knuckling under to a woman now."

Again the hitherto well concealed temper manifested its smouldering presence. If Ziba made an amorous lover, he might also develop into a terrifying bully, should his wife offend in the smallest matter.

Instinctively the girl recalled her parents' lenient ways. How patiently they bore with her shortcomings, how few were the unkind words spoken, in Briar Cottage! Was it possible she felt a little homesick on this her first night away from parental guidance?

Ziba gave her a candle, and conducting her up the first flight of stairs, impressed a last warm kiss on her lips as he murmured "Good-night."

"Sweet slumbers be yours, my glorious lily," he cooed. "I shall dream of you in your white garb, like the flowers you represent. You shall neither toil nor spin. Your path shall be a bed of roses, nothing I can give will be too good for my young and beautiful bride."

He watched her with devouring eyes as she flitted down the corridor.

"In a few days she will be mine, to hold for all time," he thought, with a glow of desire. "Then I need no longer fear Hester's scathing comments. She has held the reins too long, it is time she took a

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back seat. I have allowed her unlimited latitude, she has so controlled my private affairs that she arrogates to herself an undesirable supremacy. It will be well for her to stay on here and continue her good work in England, while I hie me to Utah with my little prize. Later, when Hester joins us, I may be less infatuated. Time is a wonderful subduer of passion's mandates. Even the lovely Jacinth may appear ordinary in my eyes when, like a bee, I have sucked the sweets from that fragile flower. Such rare loveliness may prove short lived. How the people stared at her to-night ! • What a lucky fellow they thought me ! ”

Thus chuckling over his conquest he resorted to the board-room, to partake of a strong brandy and soda, a companion to his good-night pipe.

The evening had proved one of long torment to Hester. Vividly she pictured the loving couple enjoying every moment of those hours which held agony for her. At last the revelation had come, that she could endure no longer the faith which had held her fast since infancy. If a few months ago any one had prophesied that she would dare to break the chains and betray the secrets of Mormon infidelities, she would have met the idea with a storm of derision. Then she believed Ziba would never fall in love again. His wives would continue to be selected like cattle in a herd, kept only to bring newly-born souls into Zion, working in the fields to

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pay their maintenance. But the scene changed when Jacinth loomed on Ziba's horizon. He betrayed his weakness for her in every word spoken to Hester. Jacinth was to be treated like a queen. Special meals were ordered, and flowers sent in to decorate the spacious apartment designed for her use. Sternly Hester had rearranged domestic affairs, stamping the blossoms underfoot, while telling Ziba she had sent them to a house of sickness, since such gifts might breed vaunting pride in Jacinth's soul. "

The lonely evening hours in her room proved fruitful of resolve. Hester thought no more of her immortal soul, or, if she did, realized it could not be saved through Mormon devices. She knew the whole fabric to be rotten to the core. The last remnant of her belief appeared washed away by burning tears of hatred and defiance.

" Oh, God ! how the sect have made me suffer ! " she moaned, as she heard Jacinth enter the adjoining room. " If that innocent girl could know one half of their villainy, she would sicken with horror and make good her escape."

Hearing the gentle movements of Jacinth disrobing, Hester could no longer remain silent. If she waited till the morning, Ziba might make it impossible for her to gain speech alone with the candidate for baptism. Better open the eyes of this young Englishwoman before she actually became an immersed Mormon. She honestly believed the

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girl was moral, and had been hoodwinked into the conviction that polygamy was no longer practised.

Swiftly Hester took a box from her cupboard and laid it on a plain deal table at the foot of her bed. She opened the lid, revealing documents tied closely together with crimson ribbon, her feet partially covering the uncanny blood stain.

Then setting her teeth, she moved to Jacinth's door, and turning the handle softly, found it bolted against her.

"Are you in safely, my child?" she asked; trying to make her voice sound natural. "Have you enjoyed a pleasant evening?"

Jacinth had just shaken down her hair, her open dressing gown revealing a robe of dainty white *lingerie* beneath.

"Excuse my not opening the door," she replied, "but I am just undressing. I am so very tired, I want to get to bed quickly."

For a moment Hester looked baffled, then she added in a lower tone—

"Won't you come to me? I am in terrible trouble, and I want your help."

Now the speaker no longer concealed the frenzied note, which weighted her words, adding to their insistent demands.

Jacinth sprang to her feet. Scattering some hair-pins which lay on her lap, she tossed back unruly curls from her startled eyes, hurriedly joining Hester,

already half forgetting the woman's previous unkindness.

Miss Wayne was still fully dressed in a tightly-fitting grey gown, but her ashen face and blood-shot eyes showed she was in very real distress.

"Sit down," she said, motioning Jacinth to a chair. "I have a confession to make, one strangely painful to myself."

The girl obeyed, bending forward, her hands clasped tightly over her knees.

Hester was standing at the foot of the bed, leaning against the wooden ball which bore the marks of her teeth.

"I confess," she began, "that I am jealous of you, because of your good looks and the passion you have aroused in my husband's heart. Ah! you start and turn pale, you hardly believe my words. It is difficult, is it not, for an English girl to credit that polygamy, though forbidden by law, is still the keynote of our creed? I, who was reared in Mormonism, have seen much of the bloody comedy. You cannot conceive the abject misery of a religion which preaches plural marriage in order that women may be exalted in heaven. I remember many weeping girls wringing their hands, while their mothers persuaded them to seek spiritual salvation through union with some portly old frog of an Elder. I am Ziba's first lawful wife, masquerading here as a spinster, that he may seek a fourth spouse. His

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second and third wives are now doing manual work to bring grist to his mill in Utah. Katrine is particularly servile, and being deeply religious, urged him to bring another child-bearer to add to his numerous family. He has twelve children already."

As Jacinth listened, she fancied she must be in the throes of some appalling nightmare. She could not fathom this woman's words.

"If you are his wife," she gasped, "why in Heaven's name did you help to lure me here? You are saying all this to frighten me. You want to wreck my life's happiness, and you are doing so by a tissue of lies." .

"I was true to my creed," answered the woman bitterly, "but to-night it seemed that the devil must be the author of such a doctrine. The 'spiritual wifeism' is nothing but a replica of modern free love. My soul has been crushed by the parental cruelty which forced me to accept polygamy, and bend my head before its yoke. My father was so fanatical that if I spoke a word of rebellion, he told me the evil one dwelt in my heart. I dared not disobey, so I was sealed to Elder Wayne. My cup of misery was tempered by the fact that he was a very young man at the time, and I had the high honour of being his first wife. I knew others must be added to his store, but he promised I should always have dominion over them; they would practically be my servants. Until you came he kept his word. I went to River-

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pool at his command, thinking you would join the menials in Utah when you were sealed to him for the sake of progeny."

Jacinth shuddered as a terrible conviction gripped her with an assurance of approaching evil. Could Ziba's love-making really contain such cruel delusion? It was impossible not to see that Hester spoke from inward bitterness, crushed under a system which would have killed a frailer nature.

"Ziba swore he was a godly man," stammered the girl's ashen lips. "If what you tell me is true he is the vilest seducer."

A terrible smile, the travesty of what a smile should be, parted Hester's lips.

"Had you become his plural wife," she said incisively, "he would have taught you our so-called divine law as revealed to the ancient Patriarchs. Doubtless he denied polygamy when first courting you, since Mormons declare that under certain circumstances the Lord allows His priesthood to lie in order to save His people. Young children cannot receive strong meat, they must first be fed with innocent milk. This tallies with our complicated truths, novices are taught little by little. Ziba knew well enough you would only marry him in ignorance, he never contemplated for one moment that I should turn traitor to my own people. It would revolt you to read our past history. When first in Utah a great rush was made for new wives,

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old reprobates traded for young girls, calling this shameful market 'the crowning joy and privilege of believers.' Hundreds of mere children, not more than thirteen years of age, were sealed to elderly suitors, whole families of daughters being married to one and the same man. From such orgies has our religion sprung, and the evil effects of the past cling to the present. We still suffer in our mixed population from the blood of near kindred. No relationships were too sacred to violate. When Ziba married his other wives I had to give my consent to these weddings. Had I refused, I must have stated before the President my reasons for objecting. If he decided they were justifiable, he might have prevented the marriage. In your case I could have adduced nothing but youth and good looks, not at all adequate obstacles. The President would have told me that I sinned in refusing to comply with the law given unto Sarah of old. His mandate would have gone forth that Ziba was permitted by revelation through the prophet to marry Jacinth Abbott without my sanction. I should be condemned, he would be justified. In Utah you would still have been forced to retain your maiden name, in deference to the United States mandate. All our Endowment House marriages are kept secret, unless it be a first wife. Private records are carefully concealed, and no Gentile court has as yet discovered their hiding place. Mormons

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employ peculiar tactics to defeat justice. After to-night I shall be forced to shake off the bonds, and will gladly escape from so distasteful a life. Often I have contemplated killing myself, nauseated by the work Ziba gave me to do. He forgets he loved me once, and makes no effort to control his terrible temper, which has proved the bane of my existence. If I had really hated you as much as I thought, I should have let you marry him, knowing how soon he would tire, once he had destroyed your body and soul. As a rule, Mormon women dare not disclose the story of their wrongs even to each other. They share the common fate of abandoned unfortunates. Hundreds, were they at liberty, would repudiate Mormonism, and seek Gentile protection could they obtain it in safe and reliable form. I can read the despair in your heart, poor child. You are frozen by the horror of my words. You see the feet of clay protruding from the robe of your precious saint. Perhaps, to assure yourself I am not lying, you would like to read his early love letters to me. You know his writing well enough by now." She raised the open box from the table, placing it on Jacinth's knee.

"I would not ask you to believe me without written testimony," Hester added, unfolding the closely covered sheets, illuminated by the dull gas jet.

Jacinth scanned the familiarly penned lines, her

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temples beating madly, and her soul revolting as she digested the loathsome words—

“ Beloved Hester, adored of my saintly being, I rejoice that such a peerless goddess as yourself will be linked to me for time and eternity, now I have set my feet on the brink of manhood. I hope you are resigned to the beautiful theory that as love develops with married life, man's nature so expands that a husband can love more than one spouse, and that spouse love the other wives and their offspring in a truly Christian way. Such a belief builds up a godly character, and becomes a means of grace to purify society. • Later on it should be your desire to further me in this great glory. I shall only take other wives from a sense of duty; it will be done for righteousness' sake. You were one of a polygamous family, so any breath of rebellion is a reproof to your sainted mother. No other wife shall ever have my love. You will shine as the supreme and guiding star. All must bow down before my first, revered and elevated partner. I await your kisses with parched lips. No other shall ever move me to passion.”

• Jacinth's eyes half closed, she could not endure the sight of this time-faded writing.

“ If he is so false,” she groaned, “ and all you tell me true, how could he raise the dead? You would

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have me believe him a devil, yet I have witnessed his works of power—seen them with my own eyes. How can such things be? There is no explaining the mystery? ”

CHAPTER XVII

THE WORST KIND OF BAD CHARACTER

HESTER found no difficulty in answering this question.

"You ask me how he could raise the dead? It was like his cunning to let you see one of his much-quoted miracles. He has been playing that game ever since he discovered he was a past master in the art of hypnotism. A New York scientist taught him how to develop and use the gift of which he had been conscious since childhood. His instructor little guessed the deception which would be practised by his pupil. He gave me an account of his prowess that afternoon in the Riverpool suburb. The child was easily hypnotized, and the mother delighted to accept the fee offered. The doctor, too, was one of ourselves, a clever actor, in the person of Elder Hoge. He is coming here shortly, and you were to be told he joined the Mormons since witnessing Ziba's saintly work."

As Hester spoke, Jacinth remembered in a flash her lover's description of Mormon dramatic talent. The scales fell from her eyes as the whole hideous imposture lay revealed. The wickedness appalled

her, and she wondered how she could possibly have been taken in by one so utterly abandoned. Hester read her thoughts.

"You, too, became a victim of his mesmeric power. He caught you like a bird in a snare, he told me he could control your will from afar, that he had brought you to him by stealth at night. Even now you may not be able to escape entirely from that uncanny influence. He has tried it upon me, but I am adamant. When first he spoke of taking you to himself, he remarked jestingly he wished to improve his stock, as a farmer might speak of his herd of beasts. He prays nightly that Mormons may never dwindle down to the one wife system, since bearing the image of God, it is right they should multiply exceedingly. Could you have borne to see your children brought up in such a faith? That is the much-talked-of peace and happiness in Zion. You can only imagine—while I know—the shame and heart-crushing sorrow of polygamy. Woman's true nature cries out against such abomination, but they must needs submit, imagining that this soul-destroying monstrosity will secure them everlasting life. The Prophet has declared it in the name of the Lord, polygamy was his 'Revelation.' The trick, I now know, was invented by designing men to satisfy their own passions."

Jacinth sprang to her feet.

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“I cannot bear to listen,” she gasped. “It is too disgusting, too vile. But for your goodness in speaking, I should, indeed, have been a lost woman. I little dreamed there was such villainy in the world.”

• “You are right,” replied Hester. “The secret wife system is one which should be known and condemned throughout the universe. Those wretched girls you dragged into Mormonism will learn this to their cost.” •

The sting of the words broke Jacinth down, she burst into a flood of tears.

“My God!” she moaned, “why was I not warned?”

Even as she murmured the agonized words, her father's desperate censure returned to her mind, with the strong articles in the Riverpool papers. She regarded herself as some other being, swamped in ignorance, controlled by a mind which imparted a foreign nature to her body. • All love for Ziba now turned to such a bitter loathing, the very thought of him congealed her blood.

“I must go back to save my victims,” she cried. “The girls shall hear from my own lips what Ziba really is. I cannot sleep under this roof, I shall leave to-night.”

Hester looked frightened.

“No, my child,” she answered quickly. “You are too young to wander about in the dark unprotected. You must wait until the morning. I will

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let you out quite early, and you can make your way straight to the station. You speak of saving the girls you led astray. You forget that one, at least, is already journeying towards the Salt Lake. Maggie Piper was sealed to an Elder before leaving this house. It was not really a marriage at all. One of our priests mumbled a service behind a blanket hung in the middle of the room. Maggie and her betrothed were on the other side of the blanket. This was done for extra secrecy, that she might not see the priest, since the young man had other wives in Utah. Her bridegroom was one of Brother Brigham's numerous descendants. He boasted much of his connexion with that grand ancestor, described as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator. He only wished to follow in Brigham Young's steps, holding that all must perish who fought against Zion. Zion, he told Maggie, was hid in one of the chambers of the Lord, adding that the scourge of the Almighty was upon the Gentiles. She laughed at his Biblical phrases, thinking he would keep her in luxury when she joined the Company of Saints, little guessing the men grow fat on the earnings of the feminine fools they lure from the four quarters of the earth."

Jacinth's burning tears continued to flow. She was not weeping for her own disillusioned affections, but for the retribution awaiting poor, ignorant Maggie Piper.

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“ I will tell you why I can leave to-night,” Jacinth said when she could control her voice. “ Someone is living opposite who will see I come to no harm. I should stifle if I remained in that room, conscious I was under the same roof with a loathsome hypocrite, full of lying speeches and dark intrigues. I fear his sorceries. All his schemes are from the devil. Thank Heaven I am not yet baptized. You suggested I might escape, saying I could easily walk out now, since I had not become an immersed Mormon. I dreaded the ceremony in the public baths.”

Hester gave a low, harsh laugh.

“ One of the papers declared,” she replied, “ there was no harm in using these baths for Mormon baptisms, provided total immersion of the missionary was practised, he being kept under for a sufficient length of time! I have not only saved you from a false religion, but from a husband whose cruel tyranny you must soon have discovered. He would have sworn to you on your wedding-day that the only system of marriage he recognized was that common among Christians, inwardly chuckling over the trick practised on a newly-converted Gentile. He excuses all his falsehoods because outsiders have no right to pry into Mormon business. In such cases, for the good of Saints, ungodly persons must be deceived.”

Already Jacinth had rushed into her room, and was hastily dressing as Hester talked.

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"Do not think me ungrateful for not taking your advice and staying till morning," whispered the distracted girl. "I am terrified of meeting Ziba again, though I do not believe, now my eyes are open, his mesmerism could take any real effect. How extraordinary that I never suspected he was using some subtle influence to turn my brain! It was not like me to treat my parents in that horribly deceitful manner. I thought I was doing the will of God. I was convinced that I was justified. When Ziba cast his lustful eyes upon me, I mistook it for the gaze of a saintly Apostle. He made me observe everything from his point of view. Once he even told me that he had seen the Lord, who always guided him by a filmy cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which was in reality a sanctified spirit going before him in this earthly wilderness. I believed that, too; I believed everything. How little I dreamt you would be my truest friend! If ever I can repay you for your amazing goodness, it will be the happiest day of my life."

"When I have broken free," replied Hester, "I may indeed want a friend. My idea is to shake the dust of Mormonism from my feet, and show up its villainies far and wide. If I can afford to do so, I shall go on a lecturing tour to warn all English-speaking people against this hideous monstrosity."

"Good," declared Jacinth; "they need a strong

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opponent. But is it possible some terrible revenge might be planned to stay your tongue? ”

Hester gave a significant nod.

“ Of course there is grave danger, but I am willing to face it, since life holds little for me now. It was merely cowardice which prevented my ending a miserable existence years ago. I accepted the agony of martyrdom because I was weak, though Ziba always thought me, oh, so strong ! Life’s nobler instincts had been crushed out of me with sacrilegious hands. I was told by brutalized and debased men that I should be purified by the Mormon system. The purifying I received was a lesson in patience and self-command. As the wife of a conceited prig who, if I spoke one word of censure, instantly proclaimed me as ‘ damned for hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,’ I have seen him cruelly chastising his own children in a way that makes a woman’s blood boil. When I pleaded a sufficiency of the inhuman punishment he merely asked, in his stentorian voice, whether I would have God’s little ones go ‘ unwhipped of justice ’ ? He added that without stripes they could never repent or embrace the everlasting covenant. He wished to cast out devils before the swamping scourge overtook his offspring. I have heard him tell a terrified girl-child of six years old that she would be swept with the wicked from off the face of the land, that evil spirits would devour her, since a tree is

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known by its fruits, and she was ripening for endless torment. The little one cried half the night ; she was Katrine's youngest. But Katrine is a poor feeble creature, utterly dominated by the Mormon creed. To her the task was to be given of making you see polygamy in the right light. You could never have escaped, for you would have been penniless, and, therefore, unable to journey home. I have done much evil in the past, but I hope to-night's work may be taken into account."

Jacinth was now ready to depart, and flinging her arms gratefully round Hester's neck, kissed her with the warmth of a sister.

"Heaven bless you," whispered Ziba's wife. "I will guide you to the hall-door, lest you miss your way. Perhaps we had better not take a candle. One never knows in a place like this who may be spying about."

This hint of possible detection filled Jacinth with petrifying dread.

"Supposing Ziba hears us, what could he do?" asked his frightened dupe.

Hester knew him well enough to prophesy the probable course of events.

"He would tell you most likely that I was mad, or lying through jealousy, since no one wished to take me to wife. We should have some of his specious texts. I should be described as caught by the powers of darkness, lured away from the Rock

against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. My devil would have to be exorcised, an easy matter, since Ziba professes to speak in unknown tongues, interpret visions, and heal the sick both of mind and body. He says he can drink any deadly thing and it would not hurt him. He has done this before a fanatical audience, who little dreamt they were witnessing a conjuring trick, so skilfully was the liquid changed. At one time he carried a harmless snake in his pocket, pretending it was a poisonous viper, quoting, 'They shall take up serpents,' etc. If he thought you were trying to get away, he would not hesitate to forcibly detain you. You see you could do him so much harm if you returned to Riverpool to testify against Mormonism. I have no doubt we shall reach the door safely, seeing it is now so very late. But, just for precaution's sake, let me tell you, at the end of this passage there is an ordinary-looking hot-water cupboard. It contains a secret door found by pressing the far corner of the left-hand panel, where an almost invisible nail may be felt. The passage leads to the door of a small room which is Ziba's private study. Any one knowing of this would find it a useful spyhole; he confers in there with other lights as evil as himself. A prisoner might learn her fate had she the courage to creep down that narrow, dark channel. No one knows of this door save Ziba and myself."

Jacinth paid little heed to the information, feeling

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convinced in a few moments she would be out in the free air, making her way to Mr. Carson's lodgings. A lump rose in her throat as she remembered Basil Hope. What a contrast that upright, honest Englishman now presented to the sleek, text-ridden Mormon, with his licentious desires and overwhelming conceit! It had almost become a habit for Jacinth to think in texts, so infectious was Ziba's mode of speech. Until now, his profane talk surrounded him with an atmosphere of piety. The old habit returned to Jacinth as inwardly she murmured, "Oh, my soul, come not into their assembly."

"Take my hand," whispered Hester, "I know the way so well that I can lead you. Tread softly, perhaps we had better carry our shoes. These Mormon Saints nourish murderous designs. Daily they pray for the death of their enemies. Fear of their vengeance has kept me dumb for years. I am fully alive to danger, and intend to escape myself before Ziba is awake to-morrow morning. He consented not to share my apartment to-night, for fear of arousing your suspicions."

Jacinth set her lips as she pictured the miserable union, seared by Mormon enormities. Ziba was now a blasphemous infidel in her eyes, the worst kind of bad character.

She was thankful of Hester's guiding hand, being unfamiliar with the way. They passed quickly down the stairs, not noticing until they were on a

line with the board-room door that a thin ray of light proclaimed some one was still about. Simultaneously they both perceived the ominous gleam. At that moment the door opened and Ziba appeared, accompanied by Elder Hoge, who had arrived at midnight in a friend's motor. The two had been discussing business affairs, indulging the old-world habit of snuff-taking, accompanied by spirits and tobacco. Too late to draw back, for already the searching rays of flaring gas revealed the night wanderers, who now boldly made a rush for the hall. Quick as lightning the Elders followed, Ziba muttering to the excited Hoge—

“ They can't get out ; the key is in my pocket.”



CHAPTER XVIII

WORTHY OF DEATH

A SMILE of evil triumph parted Orson's lips. "Ziba," he thought, "is never caught napping."

Already Hester was struggling with the latch, feeling in the dark for the key she had expected to find in the usual place. On realizing it was not there, she turned despairing eyes to Jacinth. Already Ziba was lighting the gas, while Elder Hoge cut off their retreat at the foot of the stairs. They were hedged in on every side by confining walls.

"What does this unseemly conduct mean at such an hour?" demanded Ziba, addressing both women as they stood with hands linked and pale faces of defiance.

Jacinth was now the bolder of the two. The knowledge which had come to her was working its effect, all fatigue being forgotten under the influence of rage and scorn.

"It means," she said, holding her head high, her

voice imperious, her manner aloof, "that I am leaving this house never to return. I have found out what you really are. I know you to be a married man, with not one, but three wives. It is almost unthinkable that you should scheme to make an English girl your fourth victim. Thank heaven that this good and much injured woman has had the pluck to speak out, and save me from your treachery. You made me think you a saint through lies and mesmerism; even your raising the dead was a blasphemous piece of acting. Now you know what I think of you, open that door and let me pass. Hester and I will go together. I shall seek the protection of the law."

Jacinth felt bold in the knowledge that she need only cross the road to find a detective ready to deal with this sinful man. It never entered her head Ziba would dare detain her, once she had broken away from the enthrallments of his guilty love. She could be of no use to him now with her heart full of hatred. To her surprise, he simply set his back against the locked door, folded his arms, and looked at the trembling figure with a compassionate gaze.

"You have judged too hastily, my child," he said, "and but for your youth I could never forgive those stinging words. When I warned you of my sister's jealousy I little thought she would go to such lengths: she has fed your impressionable nature

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with a tissue of lies. She hardened her heart against me, and has become like unto a flint. She saw you were exceeding fair and delightful, and feared your beauty would entice me as a snare. She has figuratively shot arrows at me, but since the soul of goodness is in me, they cannot pierce my spiritual armour. I stand blameless, having performed the work which heaven commanded me to do. It would be better for Hester if she were buried in the depths of the sea, swept away by the fierceness of the wind. I thought she was a vessel for holiness, but behold there is no light or soundness in her. She has caused you to offend by poisoning your mind against the elect, just as you were about to be consecrated to the people of God. She would destroy me from envy, for she cannot work miracles. If you will now hearken unto my words your immortal soul shall not be utterly destroyed. Take back what you said a moment since, kneel at my feet, and implore pardon from the Almighty's instrument."

Jacinth shuddered as she drew further away. She remembered the letter penned in those early days to his first wife.

"I am tired of your high-flown conversation," she replied coldly. "It no longer rings true. You are the father of twelve children; from the very first you sought my ruin."

He shook his head sadly, battling down his rising

anger, since diplomacy might still win the day. He was seeking to re-hypnotize her, surprised the power took so long to work.

Hester gloried in Jacinth's bold utterances. It was worth any future suffering, to hear the girl whom Ziba loved, pouring forth those sharp home truths.

Orson's face was a study as he listened to the wrangling words in mute admiration of Ziba.

"I wonder you are not struck dead for uttering such heresy against one whom the Lord has raised up, to be a choice seer, destined to bring restoration into the house of Israel," Ziba proclaimed. "Had you become a real, true Mormon, you would have been brought into spiritual relationship with the ancient Nephitis, and reckoned as their seed. Is it possible you intend returning to your infidel herd in Riverpool when you could spend the rest of your days among ministering angels? I had planned so much for your happiness; I wished you to be as the daughters of the Lamanites, who gathered themselves together to sing, dance, and make themselves merry."

His eyes seemed burning into Jacinth's brain. She put up her hand to her forehead as if to shield her sight from blinding sun. She was growing afraid of his uncanny power; it could never make her love again, or bring her to believe Hester had spoken

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falsely, but it might weaken her physical power of resistance.

"I am anxious to be gone," she cried. "You have no right to keep me here against my will, listening to absurd eulogies of your holiness. I am not a Mormon, and never intend to become one. I know you are trying to influence me by hypnotic suggestion, but I can laugh in your face now that the spell has been broken. All your villainy is unveiled, and I see how you have destroyed my happiness by making me false both to my parents and promised husband. The former may forgive me, but I can never expect the latter to speak to me again. Where is the key to that door? If you cannot open it, let me go by another exit."

From Ziba's now unresponsive stare she turned to the dumb Hester, who knew only too well what to expect.

"Make him do as I ask," whispered the girl, pulling at her sleeve, thus rousing her from a stunned reverie.

Hester answered under her breath—

"It's no good, simply waste of breath; they have no intention of letting you out."

An icy dread crept over Jacinth. She felt inclined to shriek, and only mastered her terror with an effort. She moved nearer to Ziba and hit him with her fists in the chest.

"Why do you stand there doing nothing," she

tried hotly, "when you should be imploring pardon for your hypocrisy? Are you the devil himself that you smile at me in that hideous fashion? I know I was in your power once, but hypnotism cannot answer when the enlightened mind rebels. It stifles me to breathe the same air with one so blasphemous and immoral. If you keep me here a moment longer, I shall scream the house down."

He raised his hand protestingly.

"Before you disgrace yourself by such an exhibition of weakness, listen to my defence. I swear that all Hester told you was bred of sudden madness. Look at her!" pointing to the ashen face and haggard eyes, "does not her countenance tell you that she has broken down mentally? We must deal gently with her, seeing it is the fruit of overwork. When the mind gave way she imagined all sorts of weird situations like those in dreams. Her thoughts teem with erroneous and untrue doctrines. She believes her brother to be her husband, she forces a family upon me, and alienates from my pure bosom the one creature I love. I perceive the inward working of her brain like Amulek, who could discern thoughts. Madness has turned her into an avenging demon, wicked and perverse as the children of darkness. We shall have to keep her under constraint, and do our best to cure this sickness. She may come out of it with a contrite spirit. How can

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I let you go to spread abroad her delusions to my own detriment? Look in my eyes, Jacinth, and tell me—does not my face shine with heavenly radiance? Can you not perceive in it an exceeding lustre like that of Moses when preaching to a crowd of wicked men? The reflection is that of incessant soul-absorbing labour for the salvation of others.”

Jacinth felt compelled to look, and her eyes actually discerned an uncanny light playing about his features. She knew it must be the work of his highly trained powers. He could control her eyes, if not her heart, and noting her expression of startled surprise, he smiled.

“ You are coming out of your awful state of blindness,” he murmured ; “ many do stumble, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them, but in the end I shall establish peace.”

Hester knew well what he was doing, and thrust her tall form between the man and the girl.

“ You coward,” she hissed, “ stop your diabolical practices. You accuse me of madness, but Jacinth knows that I was sane when I told her of your grosser crimes. She has even read the letters written by your hand when you swore fidelity to me, in thought, if not in actual deed. Your conceited speeches must be an abomination to the Almighty, if there is really a God to hear and punish such as you. Heaven will curse you for your devilish plots against the

chastity of your victims. You have lost the respect of your wives and the confidence of your children. Why not do one good thing in your life, and let this young girl depart from this house of infamous idolatry?"

He turned to Hester with a look of satanic cunning, as if he would have killed her on the spot.

"Maniac," he muttered, "but for your madness you would never dare break away from the truths you have held dear, accusing me of debauchery and crime."

His air was so ferocious that Hester feared he would strike her to the ground.

"My sister's enormity cannot be overlooked," he cried, addressing Elder Hoge. "Help me, brother, to convey her to her chamber, where we must leave her to wrestle with her own evil nature till the morning. I shall remove any weapons with which she could take her life, and since you are a doctor, converted to Mormonism, you can treat this unruly patient medically. Miss Abbott will recognize you as a Riverpool surgeon, so your presence may give her confidence."

The two men made a sudden rush at Hester, pinioning her arms and marching her quickly up the stairs.

Jacinth, overcome with rage, called out after the departing trio—

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"I know who you are, a lying Elder who tricked us all over the caravan incident."

It filled her with horror to see Hester dragged forcibly from the hall. She knew she could not help the "unfortunate woman by following, so seized this opportunity of trying to make good her own escape.

Having once more shaken the door, she ran from room to room with the idea of opening one of the windows. All were shuttered and barred by great clumps of iron, securely padlocked. She could find no way to the back premises, since the passage leading there was likewise shut off. Instinctively the girl knew she was caught like a rat in a trap, remembering to her intense relief the red handkerchief in her under skirt. When daylight came, if still confined in the building she would fasten it to her window-pane, as instructed by the detective. By the time she had exhausted her search, the two grim figures of her gaolers appeared at the head of the stairs.

For a moment Jacinth hesitated. Should she shriek loudly and beat upon the shutters hoping to attract some passer-by? In all probability the road would be empty, or if any one came to her rescue they would be reassured by one of Ziba's ready lies. Might it not be wiser to practise diplomacy lest she be confined in some dark cell, from which the red handkerchief could never flutter?

Clasping her hands she looked up at the dark-coated figures.

"Was Hester really mad?" asked the girl's tremulous voice; "if so, how terribly rude I have been to you!"

"Rude is hardly a strong enough word," answered Ziba sententiously. "I fear it will be some time before you are spiritually perfected. Eventually the way of redemption may be open to you, though at present you have fallen back to the hosts of unregenerated heathens. I perceive you are not fit to be adopted into the family of our Eternal King. I must postpone your baptism to-morrow."

Ziba thought slyly to himself—

"It would be risky to let her out until we are fully assured she is once more convinced of our righteousness. She might break away from us as we conveyed her to the baths."

Jacinth advanced slowly towards him, apparently resigned to the fact she was being forcibly detained in Elvaston House.

Now Ziba spoke aloud.

"Undoubtedly poor Hester's brain has snapped, and, knowing my writing so well, she even forged letters to give colour to her wild statements. It is a tragedy to me, for my sister is the only relation I have in the world. I fear she has alarmed you terribly—for this reason I will overlook your cruel words, which show me how unreliable your love

may prove. Possibly your head is racking with fatigue, but I can cure it for you better than any physician."

He bent forward as she approached, and startled her by laying a burning hand upon her forehead. In her excited state of mind it seemed magnetic currents were being transmitted from the man's strong nature to the girl's sensitive organization. She wished to shake off the touch, but it bound her like an iron fetter. Ziba looked at her with an expression of extreme earnestness. He was exercising intense mental effort.

"Jacinth," he said, "by virtue of the authority vested in me as an Elder in the Church of Latter-Day Saints, I absolve you from the hideous sin into which you have fallen this night, should your repentance prove sincere. Hitherto you have been obedient to the teaching of our Apostles. It pains me deeply that you cannot go down into the waters of baptism for the remission of your sins, so soon as I anticipated. We had hoped to confer upon you to-morrow the gift of a converted spirit, which might abide in you for ever. Now that lamp unto your feet and light upon your pathway must be postponed, though later on you may be guided into all truth."

Jacinth tried to conceal her scornful attitude as she listened to words which would have impressed her but a few hours ago. Her love-making with

Ziba appeared as part of another life. Then she was asleep, now she was awake, fully alive to the terrifying realities of her position.

"If father could see me now," she thought, "I believe he would die of fright. Thank Heaven, he is resting in his bed undisturbed."

It was merciful she could not know the hours of agonizing suspense which drove sleep from the eyes of her anxious parents.

"Since Hester is mad," continued Ziba, hastily forming plans, "it would not be nice for you to sleep in an adjoining room. I will bring your things to another apartment, as she might disturb you for hours with her ravings."

Jacinth protested she had no fear of the unfortunate sufferer.

"Perhaps," said Ziba suspiciously, "you are not truly convinced that she is mentally deranged, in which case I tremble for your own intellect. The shock of seeing her in this state of nervous breakdown, might well affect your own reasoning powers. Be calm, and obey my mandates, since I work only for your good."

Jacinth became conscious of such intense weariness that she could hardly keep her eyes open. Wherever he bade her sleep she would accept this offer of rest, that her mind might be in a sounder condition to plot against him in the morning. So she suffered herself to be led to a bedroom opposite

Hester, where more material comforts awaited the weary guest.

"You may be tempted to walk in your sleep," said Ziba, "so I shall take the liberty of turning your key."

A quick protest rose to the girl's lips, but before she could frame words of indignation he had slipped out, and accomplished his threat. She heard him hurrying away. Then staggering, half fainting, to the bed, she fell prostrate on the dull red counterpane.

Ziba returned to Orson Hoge, his face strangely pale.

"I have lost Jacinth," he gasped: "my God, I have lost the fairest blossom that ever adorned my manly being. I meant to make her one of the loveliest leaves in the blessed Tree of Life. Now she may never again delight in my endearments. To-morrow, Brother Orson, meet me in my private room that we may discuss our future campaign. It is hard to believe that Hester has really turned against the faith, yet I know she has never been more sane than at this moment. The way she listened to Jacinth's abuse of me, with that hard, calculating expression of rebellion, revealed the kind of enemy I have to deal with. She has fallen into unforgivable error, because I worshipped at the shrine of beauty. She has, therefore, caused Jacinth to stumble exceedingly, giving Satan great power

over her. I doubt not that Hester is worthy of death. Ponder my words during your hours of repose. Hester is a tree that has failed to bring forth good fruit, therefore the axe must be laid to her roots. She shall be hewn down and her soul cast into undying fire."

"Verily," answered Orson Hoge. "A traitor to the cause is a fit subject for Blood Atonement."



CHAPTER XIX

HIS POUND OF FLESH

JACINTH slept the sleep of extreme exhaustion. Even fear could not baulk nature of its due. When she woke in the morning to find herself a prisoner, fresh rage welled into her heart, accompanied by unspeakable terror.

What would those men do who dared detain her in this illegal fashion? Did Ziba still think that by such conduct he could regain his ascendancy over her mind? Common sense told her the longer she openly rebelled, the more rigid would the supervision become. He had tricked her so ably in the past, it would be good to deceive him in return, only she feared she might not be clever enough to combat a brain so full of guile.

At nine o'clock she heard a tap on the door, and asked who was there. Ziba's voice answered, and now the very sound of it was so strangely obnoxious, that she had to restrain a little cry.

"If you are dressed, my daughter in the Lord, open your door, and I will bring you in a more tasty breakfast than you deserve."

Jacynth saw through this feigned act of attention

he did not wish her to gain speech with any menials. She was wearing her travelling dress, eagerly hoping the return journey to Riverpool might be taken that very morning.

"Ziba brought in the tray with an air of supreme condescension.

"No one shall say you were starved in my house," he declared, placing the not unappetising food on a table by the window.

Already Jacinth had noted to her intense disappointment and dismay, that this window looked on a high, blank wall at the back of the house: The red handkerchief would carry no message.

"Not a very pleasant outlook," Ziba declared, "but it has one redeeming point. No one can pry into your apartment."

She traced cynicism in the words.

"Are you going to breakfast with me?" she asked, forcing a smile.

The man shook his head.

"I fed a full hour ago," he replied, "for my labours are heavy and I have a hard day before me. I only regret you are not fit to join the other young souls whom I am chaperoning to baptism. They are lodging on the upper storey and wait, full of zeal, the benefits in store."

Jacinth clasped her hands.

"Oh, forgive my thoughtless words last night," she pleaded, "and do not shut me away when so

great a blessing awaits your servant. You said I should be born of the Spirit when brought forth out of the water. Surely I need cleansing, and pardon of trespassers should be the joy of Saints."

Ziba frowned as he replied—

"You have lost the privilege by decrying the Lord's anointed. After you have done penance you shall receive the gifts of the Church. Then, when you have laid down the weapons of rebellion, arms of mercy shall be extended towards you. Last night I saw you encircled about with the dark angels of everlasting destruction. If you will spend the whole of to-day in prayer and self-examination, the chains of hell may be loosed, your soul will expand, and your term of probation be over."

Jacinth looked bewildered.

"You do not mean," she gasped, "that I am to stay here alone all day without even seeing poor Hester. You say she is ill, at least allow me to nurse her."

Ziba's face grew, if possible, even harder.

"You placed yourself of your own free will in my care. You promised before leaving Riverpool to do all my bidding, therefore rebel not against this penance only commanded for your good. Hester is not in a fit condition to be nursed by a young girl. Madness is very distressing, she might work again on your mind, making you as insane as herself. I am never mistaken, since the Almighty has shown

me all things. I prescribe for you some days of careful watchings and continual penitence. Many more orthodox priests would add to your punishment by withholding food and water. I err on the side of leniency. In earlier days you would have been stripped of your clothing, bound with strong cords, and smitten upon the cheeks. I propose to even further temper your confinement. You shall have the run of this corridor outside, which I can shut off from the staircase by locking a sliding door. Wander if you will into the rooms adjoining yours, which are at present empty. The apartments opposite I must keep locked, for various reasons. Hester occupies one, and absolute quiet is ordered for her. Then the windows look on to the road, and the pleasure of seeing outside life is not fitting for one who is seeking to regain her spiritual balance."

Jacinth tried to choke back her feelings of despair and hatred. This man knew well enough she would manage to communicate with the outer world if given access to those windows. Evidently he was sufficiently cunning to run no risks.

"You will not see me again until to-morrow," he continued. "My dear medical brother from Riverpool will bring you the necessary meals. You can clean out your room yourself, and will find brooms and dusters in a housemaid's closet at the end of this corridor. I have much business to discuss in my study, and then, after writing some important

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letters, I go forth to work in the vineyard, lodging to-night at the house of a saintly Elder, an hour's journey from London. I trust on my return I shall find you in a right mind, willing to swear fealty to Mormon edicts. Whether you will prove worthy to be joined unto myself is another matter. I may yet take you to wife if the spirit moves me."

Jacinth's blood boiled, her nature hotly rebelling against the infamous deception still breathed forth by this outwardly pious fraud.

She began trying to eat the food, now growing cold, upon her plate. She wished he would leave her, since a terrible temptation seized her to strike him in the mouth, an action so highly injudicious that she crushed the desire firmly.

Ziba now rose, his eyes taking a last look at the shapely figure, admiring its willowy lines, as he inwardly vowed he would yet subdue her in his iron grip. If she were disillusioned to-day, the dawn might break when his prisoner welcomed him with her spirit humbled, and her brain again controlled by the useful science of mesmerism.

"I will depart in peace," Ziba murmured. "God grant you may yet prove a convert destined to build up His Kingdom. You will come with me to the valley of Jehovah, and forget the dark days when your soul grew seared with Hester's infectious sin—you need a strong man's protection. If I lose a sister I shall gain a wife. In time her poor brain

might heal, and we may see her resting in flowery beds of ease."

Jacinth vividly recalled his glowing descriptions of the life offered his new bride in Utah, they coincided with the voluptuous blandishments of Asiatic dreamers.

She breathed more freely as the door closed on his tall, reedy figure. She heard him tramp down the corridor, as with apparent effort he drew the heavy sliding door across the exit, bolting it noisily. Then, like a panting, half-stifled animal, she rushed out into the deserted passage, knocking on Hester's door and whispering through the keyhole—

"Hester, open, it is Jacinth; I must speak to you."

No answer, save a strange gurgling sound which filled her with horror.

"I believe she is bound and gagged," thought the girl with a shudder, while still more passionate appeals only received the same uncanny response.

"What misery have I brought that unfortunate woman! In trying to save me I fear she has destroyed herself."

Abandoning all chance of communicating now with her fellow prisoner, Jacinth, after trying the other locked doors, wandered in a dazed condition through the empty rooms at her disposal. They were meagrely furnished for Mormon guests, each containing a goodly supply of tracts. their windows

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not being stained on account of the unattractive outlook.

At the end of the passage she found a bath-room, the housemaid's closet referred to, and, with a sudden thrill of joy, a hot-water cupboard piled up with sheets for airing. Hester's words rushed back—a secret door, a panel on the left hand side, a nail almost too small to see, which might be felt by a sensitive finger.

For a moment Jacinth's head reeled. Dare she eavesdrop at the door of Ziba's study, risking detection and grosser punishment? On the other hand, if he were conferring with his partners in crime, she might gain some useful information. The chance was too tempting to miss, and after all at the present time things were about as bad as they possibly could be.

With trembling hands she fumbled up and down the panel, tingling from head to foot with almost uncontrollable excitement.

"Is it possible," she thought, "that some reflection of my agony will reach the dear ones at Briar Cottage and fill them with a vague presentiment of evil?"

Although expecting the occurrence, she started violently as the panel flew back, revealing a tiny dark entrance. The little tunnel was only just wide enough for an average figure to squeeze along, with shoulders sideways and head bent.

Terrible stories of people being bricked up alive returned to Jacinth's mind as she carefully closed, without entirely shutting, the door in the panelled wall. As she crept nearer she could hear Ziba talking, and a strange echo in the place made every word amazingly clear.

"Brother Orson," he was saying, "I have been much troubled during the night over the soul of my dear wife, Hester. Alas! she has not lived her religion. I fear she will never reach an 'exaltation' unless her blood be shed."

Jacinth's heart stood still, as pressing her fingers to her lips she feared to shriek aloud and thus betray her presence.

Orson Hoge made a sound of bestial satisfaction, the madness of fanaticism was in his veins.

"If Mrs. Wayne were in her right mind and realized the enormity of her offence, I feel convinced she would be glad to give her life in expiation," he declared grimly. "The fact is, beloved Ziba, you are fond enough of her to do her this great kindness. Many are the instances where men and women have been righteously slain in order to atone for their sins. We cannot let this hitherto godly Mormon wife become an angel to the devil. If she pays the penalty of her breath she may yet conquer hell and the grave, being raised up to eternal life. It will be better for her since she needs our help, she should not be satisfied or rest until her blood is spilled.

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Well she knows our doctrine of human sacrifice, though unfortunately the ignorance and wickedness of nations forbid this principle taking full force. We must, therefore, walk warily, and make it seem that she has committed suicide."

Ziba paced up and down the room; Jacinth knew well the sound of his steps. His head was held high as he breathed hard.

"If we do not save her thus," he declared, "she will join the accursed Gentiles, and the arrows of the Almighty will strike her down beyond redemption. I have thought out a way by which this covenant-breaker may pass peacefully into oblivion. Remember, Orson, we are only killing her to save her soul. Let that be well understood. Brother Wilford has ever been my right-hand man since his conversion to Mormonism. He is without fear and without reproach. Before I converted him and made him a Latter-Day Saint he was unhappily a great criminal, who had evaded justice through his skill and daring."

Ziba alluded to a veritable blackguard, who was willing, for mercenary remuneration, to undertake any dirty work too daring for the apostle's taste.

"Wilford is pious enough to understand why our action is necessary," continued Ziba. "Apart from saving Hester's soul, the Saints would suffer sorely were she to spread her heresies abroad. The Church would lose power; we cannot afford to slip back."

The speaker gave forth the words with impressive decision.

"I have told Wilford," he added, "to join us at this hour, and receive his orders. Since the removal of Hester's soul from her body is to take place to-night, I propose, Orson, you and I should be away on some saintly business, discovering her suicide on our return. The child in the room opposite will know nothing of what is taking place, and before long I have good hope of winning her for myself. I shall subjugate her brain, and mesmerize her so completely that I may whisk her off to Utah in a dazed condition, becoming her husband without her realizing that no ceremony has taken place. In the land flowing with milk and honey she will bask in her love dream until the days are fulfilled when she cannot return. Then she may be bound to me by the greatest tie of all,—little hands will hold her fast."

Elder Hoge now replied in quick accents.

"I do not often go against your mandates, most holy Ziba, but, for once, desire has blinded you to caution. You think this maiden docile, you imagine you can regain your supernatural influence. Though you are a high dignitary of our Church, she will never believe that a great honour has been conferred upon her by joining your plural wives. She is just as worthy of death as Hester herself. You are jeopardizing your position by allowing her to live."

Ziba's fists clenched.

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"Do you think I would have my love story end in so tame a manner? I want my pound of flesh first. I have worked hard to win her, and shall she dare refuse the Lion of the Lord?"

Orson shook his head.

"You will wake to wisdom later," he murmured. "In the meanwhile should the wench ruin you, it will not be my fault."

At that moment the study door opened and Wilford entered. He was a man of six-and-twenty, short, thick-set, with a bullet-shaped head, very stiff hair, and narrow dark eyes. His face was so flexible he could invest it with sanctity, severity, or sprightliness to suit as occasion demanded. A notorious character in the United States, he had given his services to Mormon elders on condition they would help him to conceal his identity. He was now a missionary and apostle, shorn of the beard he used to wear, his wiry hair dyed an inky black. He quoted freely from the book of Mormon, professed to believe its incomprehensible jargon, and called it the "Golden Bible." He even pretended to have visions, in imitation of Ziba. Owing to his usefulness he was waxing wealthy. His confrères had jokingly declared it was fortunate Wilford had not originally discovered the plates of gold in the holy mountain, since he would undoubtedly have melted them down for his own profit. He was a past master in systematic false swearing, and blood-

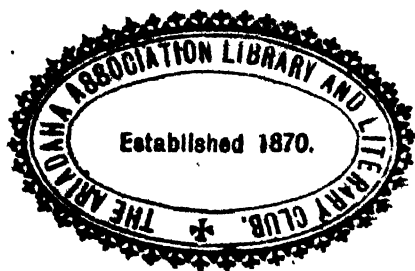
thirsty deeds apparently came as easily to him as every-day tasks.

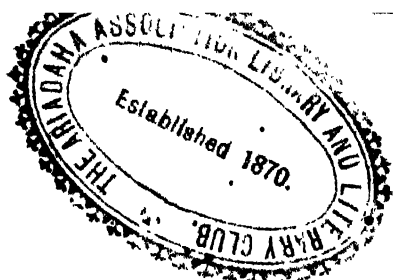
"Brother," said Ziba, seating himself at a desk, "I have deemed my first, and now guilty spouse, Hester, worthy of extermination, like vermin who undermine the foundations of our houses. She intends, if she can, to drag our saintly deeds through the mire, that the heathen may jeer at our expense. To-night I desire, when I am out of the house, that Hester, who by then will be exceedingly thirsty, shall receive a draught pleasant to the taste, but containing a harmless drug which will cause instant yet prolonged slumber. After she is comfortably asleep, I wish you to enter her room unseen by any one. You can lock yourself into that wing, securing the door of the lodger opposite. Your work will be very simple. There is no fireplace in Hester's room, but you must make the windows and doors air-tight. Then pin upon her table a letter I shall give you, made out in an exact replica of her handwriting, bidding me good-bye and saying she has taken her life as an expiation of her false statements against me and the faith, uttered through jealousy, etc. Having done this, turn on the gas and make good your escape. Once you have closed the door after you, there will be no chance of Hester ever waking in this world. In the morning a great commotion must be made, and the police informed. I shall attend the inquest, admitting my sister's brain had

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shown recent signs of failure. I see no possible reason why our clever arrangement should rouse the faintest suspicion, so long as I keep Jacinth Abbott prisoner. Of course if she were to escape things might be awkward, but she will never slip through my fingers. For precaution's sake, her early morning tea had better be drugged, so that she will be sleeping peacefully when the police arrive to view the corpse."

Orson turned away to conceal his displeasure. "Fool! fool!" he thought bitterly. "For the sake of a little sensual pleasure you would risk all our lives, but I must save you from yourself. The day will come when you will acknowledge my far-sightedness, and, rising up, call me blessed."





CHAPTER XX

THE EAVESDROPPER

THERE was silence for a time while Ziba penned a hurried copy of the letter to be forged in Hester's characteristic writing.

• "Fortunately her unusual fist lends itself to easy imitation; what do you think of this, Brothers Hoge and Wilford?"

He read aloud the words quickly invented to suit his own evil purpose.

"Try in pity to forgive me, my dear Ziba, for the hideous lies I invented when in the throes of uncontrollable jealousy. So eager was I to poison the mind of my new sister-in-law against you, that in a sudden fit of madness I posed as your plural wife. I so dread this approaching sense of insanity that I have resolved to take my life by gas suffocation. Do not mourn me, ever dear brother, and ask Jacinth to pardon my infamy. Oh! how my poor head aches! I hardly know what I am doing. Pray for my soul.—Your distracted and repentant Hester."

"Very good," Orson announced; "the letter is

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sure to prove successful in blinding the eyes of unregenerate men. We are privileged, since we claim for our people the sole and only Divine Authority on earth. All others we know are jarring, clashing, and discordant sects. Heaven will recognize our deeds, since the priesthood of Aaron is conferred upon us."

Wilford asked when the forgery would be delivered into his hands.

"I will perfect it later in the day," replied Ziba; "for the moment I must beg you to excuse me. I wish to hold a little class upstairs; the young girls for baptism are awaiting my words of power. Some of them are extraordinarily enlightened, and will soon believe that Heaven's approval of plural unions in ancient days is an absolute defence of the righteousness of the marriage system introduced by revelation through the prophet Joseph Smith. They are ripening for Latter-Day glory. I shall teach them, when in Utah, that those who will not abide this law shall be damned. I fear my poor little Jacinth may never clearly see the advantages of polygamous blessings."

He sighed deeply as he moved to the door which faced the panel, behind which the eavesdropper stood.

Jacinth breathed more freely when she knew he was out of the room. The appalling wickedness she overheard seemed to almost rob her of life. She dared not move while the room was still inhabited.

lest, by the slightest sound, her presence might be detected.

Orson followed Ziba to make sure he had retreated down the dimly-lighted corridor. Then creeping back to Wilford's side on tiptoe, he addressed him in a hushed yet excited voice.

"Ziba Wayne may be a very fine fellow; I greatly admire his character and ability. Yet, for once, I am sorry to tell you he is behaving like a veritable imbecile. That girl from Riverpool, who made a most unseemly commotion in this house last night, has utterly bewitched him. Because she is good to look upon, he is wild to make her his own, and would risk all our lives, besides the reputation of the Church, sooner than forego a brief earthly satisfaction. I have resolved to brave his censure by taking matters into my own hands. I shall save him even against his will. In the end he must recognize that I have proved his truest friend. It is just as important that Jacinth Abbott should be removed as the now revolting Hester. I intend to be fearless and direct. Fall in with the plan I propose, and I will reward you from my own private store. Besides this earthly gain, you will come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into exaltation. Ziba's fair enemy must also die to-night. It appears to me so easy, you will smile at the simplicity of the double deed. First Hester will be drugged, and both doors locked, so that Miss Abbott cannot gain entry. You will

then take up Miss Abbott's supper, placing in her drink the same sleeping draught given to Hester. You will ask her kindly to sleep in the little dressing-room, on the chance of Hester needing attention in the night. Beg her, if she hears the mad woman groaning or complaining, to ring her bell, adding that Hester cannot frighten or injure her since the door between them will be locked. She can hardly refuse such a mild request, especially as Ziba tells me she appears anxious about the invalid, and asked permission to nurse her. Now let me explain what must really happen. Miss Abbott will go to bed in the dressing-room, feeling strangely slumbrous. When you enter to turn on the gas, you will open the door between those two apartments and hastily block out any air holes from Miss Abbott's little room. The gas will then permeate both chambers, since the dressing-room is hardly bigger than a bandbox. It will appear to the public that Hester opened the door, possibly to warn her young neighbour, and became overpowered by the fumes. To aid this delusion, you might lift her down and lay her on the floor close to the aperture. Now have I not thought out a satisfactory scheme to remove the thorn from our dear Ziba's bed of roses? To be truthful, I do not only think of him. Your safety and mine are both at stake. These dead women will tell no tales. The cunning letter is an able device to sweep suspicion from our path."

Wilford was a man of few words. He bluntly remarked it would certainly be wiser to brush both obstacles away at the same time.

"I shall not be in the house," Orson continued, "but my work is almost more unpleasant than your own. It lies with me to break to Ziba that his rebellious fiancée no longer lives to defile the earth. He will find many a maid equally fair. I myself will seek some young virgins for him to choose from. Jacinth Abbott would have been a millstone about his neck. She was not the kind to ever believe that Ziba, endowed with the keys of the priesthood, committed no sin by espousing her, but was justified as was Aaron."

Wilford bowed an assenting head, and began bargaining as to price. A shameful scene of haggling commenced, during which Jacinth, leaning against the wall, partially fainted away. When she recovered her full senses she heard Orson saying—

"That's settled then, we have it in black and white; shake hands over the transaction."

After this silence reigned; evidently the conspirators had left the room. Jacinth knew that every moment she remained in stifling confinement, added to her peril. Ziba might wish to revisit her, although he had said she would not see him till the morrow.

She hurried back, almost too weak to walk, terrified lest she should find the secret door closed against

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her. Though still petrified with fear, she breathed more freely as she emerged into the hot-water cupboard, made light by white wood walls and snowy sheets. Her brain could hardly fathom that she really dwelt in this house of inconceivable crime. She fancied she must wake to find it all a ghastly nightmare. If she could yet save herself and Hester it would be almost a miracle, so surrounded were they by the machinations of sinful men.

By the time Wilford admitted her to the cupboard-like dressing-room, darkness would have fallen on the earth. The detective watching opposite might not observe her red flag of danger fluttering from the window of death. Again she tried to communicate with Hester, but gained no better results. The gurgling sound was repeated, and Jacinth was more than ever convinced the luckless victim was bound and gagged. Ziba's dupe never for a moment doubted Hester's words after reading those time-worn love letters from the locked box. But now the girl had heard with her own ears the lying prophet speak of Hester as "wife." He stood irretrievably condemned. The hideous plan, which he had not the personal courage to execute, was the fruit of his own devilish imagination. She remembered, too, with a thrill of horror, his allusion to the future subjugation of her honour. No wonder the passing hours were fraught with misery, fear, and bitter weeping. As the day wore on, the approach of

twilight brought an intolerable weight of agony to her soul. During those lonely hours she had relived her whole life. Every incident returned as if to mock her. She thought of the Lovesey children with their impish faces and tiring ways. The forbidding Mrs. Lovesey, who appeared so hard a taskmistress, was an angel of light compared to her present tormentors. Vividly the racking brain visualized those early meetings with Ziba on the roadside. How peerless he seemed, apparently robed in white purity, a saint of God leading her to heaven. Then the gradual dominion of that weird, hypnotic influence, and the change in her own nature. Previously Basil Hope had filled her little world. The future held fair visions of a happy union, blessed by her parents' sanction. A great yearning for Basil turned her sick with vain regret. What was he doing now? Did he ever think of the girl he had once loved? Her father's words returned, that well-meant warning, when he described Basil as a "good catch." Already his heart might have been caught in the rebound. Little could she dream that even at that moment Basil was pacing up and down outside the house, wondering why she made no appearance. Surely on so fine a day she would emerge, possibly accompanied by Ziba, lightly discarding Carson's whispered intelligence during that theatre interlude.

Basil Hope was making himself actually ill,

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since night and day he could hardly bear for a moment to let Elvaston House out of his sight. He watched for the red handkerchief from early dawn till the sunlight dwindled, taking his meals at the opposite window, barely looking to see what food he raised to his lips. His bed was also drawn to the open casement that he might still gaze through wakeful hours at those cruel, silent walls which held his dear one. He pictured her still entranced by a man he knew to be a villain, and his only form of consolation was to re-enact in fancy the bold assault made upon the Saint's person.

During the day a telegram was forwarded from his Riverpool room, a distracted message from Hugh Abbott.

"Jacinth has entirely disappeared," ran the words, "we fear she is with the Mormons. Can you help us in any way? We are heartbroken."

Basll had immediately replied with an explicit wire.

"You are right, she is staying in a Mormon house which I am watching with a detective; we hope to gain speech with her momentarily, and shall do our best to prevent her leaving England."

Although in a manner this assurance brought some grain of comfort, it also filled the parents' hearts with blank despair. So their child had deceived them utterly, both speaking and acting lies which she must have known would bring them in

sorrow to the grave. Keenly they realized now that Mrs. Wilberforce was a fraud, a Mormon agent sent to trick them into parting with their daughter. At Briar Cottage there might have been a death in the house, for the gloom which brooded over its rose-covered walls.

Mrs. Abbott wandered about like a lost soul, frenzied, tear-swollen, almost demented. She would cry for hours, or curse the Mormons, then suddenly remembering her husband's weakness, make a desperate but short-lived effort at self control.

He, on the other hand, lay pale and nerveless, with dry, widely-distended eyes and speechless lips. Again and again he heard in fancy his child's voice as on the previous afternoon of her departure. The past day and night appeared like long years of intolerable anxiety. He saw Jacinth, in imagination, travelling to Utah, sharing the shame of an illegal marriage, accepting a Pagan religion as God's truth.

He tried to understand how she could prove so weak, now definitely connecting her unreasonable conduct with hypnotism.

"Is it possible," he thought after a minute study of the Mormon creed, "she can believe that celestial marriage fulfills the measure of woman's creation? The orthodox saints will tell her 'woman without man and man without woman cannot be saved.' The larger the progeny, the greater glory to the husband."

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It maddened him to read the Mormons' distorted borrowings from Scripture, their materialism was so evident; he marvelled they could deceive the veriest babes. He knew that one of the Elders recently in Riverpool could hold a congregation of eager listeners enthralled for over an hour, moving them to tears by his revivalistic rhetoric. This man he now discovered was Ziba Wayne, who practised curing by faith, and was a recognized expert at mental suggestion.

In his distress Mr. Abbott sent for their vicar, the author of those strong indictments which offended Jacinth in the *Parish Magazine*. The distracted father begged him to repeat all that he knew against these guilty people. It horrified him to discover the certified figures of present polygamy.

"Why does not all England rise and expel these wretched and immoral sinners?" he asked the representative of his Church.

It was difficult to answer such a question, the slackness of the public being proverbial.

"At least," said the vicar, "there is a very good hope the Government will interfere, now we have collected such a mass of evidence against the Mormons. I have a number of signed testimonies which should strengthen our hands. An American, who has been helping me, complains bitterly that things move so slowly in England. There is much truth

in his grievance. But time and patience should give us the victory."

As Mr. Abbott pondered on these things, his rage bred in him a growing strength. He had asked his wife to massage his limbs partly with the idea of distracting her thoughts. They had spoken so much of Jacinth, that at last he made an effort to turn her mind into a fresh channel.

"I have been thinking," he told his wife, "of what that London specialist said. He declared that some sudden shock might give me back the use of my limbs. I thought he was rather cruel at the time when he added, jestingly, he wished we could have an alarm of fire at Briar Cottage, advising you, in my hearing, not to try and rescue me. I was a little hurt at his harsh suggestion, though I joined in the laugh against myself. Perhaps there was something in it after all. I feel I would give a king's ransom just to get up and go for Ziba Wayne."

Mrs. Abbott poufed cold water on the words.

"You would have walked long since if you were not incurable," she said, her heart too sad even to think of her husband's illness. "I am thankful if you feel a little stronger, but it is useless to buoy yourself up with false hopes."

Mr. Abbott paid little heed to her words; he was not in a mood to face failure.

"I felt a strange new stirring," he continued, "during that terrible presentiment yesterday. My

body, as well as my brain, took part in the vision. I nearly rose at my child's call. If the waking dream had lasted longer I believe I should have stood up."

Mrs. Abbott went on rubbing—rubbing the withered limbs. Certainly the flesh felt firmer, the muscles beneath had a new stability.

Her husband watched the soothing operation with interest; he looked years older since Jacinth's departure. The mother, too, wore a painfully haggard air. Every moment she hoped some message might arrive from Jacinth, a word to explain why she had done this thing. Womanlike, she tried to invent excuses for this weak, erring child. Jacinth knew not what she did—she loved her parents in spite of her folly—she would return like a prodigal before it was too late.

Anna came softly to the door; she, like her mistress, had the air of one who moves in the house of the dead. It was evident she also had been crying, and a neglect of her usual tidiness betokened real sorrow. With cap awry, she stood on the threshold, fingering her apron.

"Please, ma'am," she began, "there is a gentleman asking to see you. A stranger, and he would not give his name; but I showed him in, thinking he might bring some news of Miss Jacinth. He seems to have rather a strange manner, as if he were hiding something. He particularly said he wanted to see you alone, and would only come in if the gentleman

of the house happened to be out. I told him master was in bed, and then he didn't hesitate any more." Mr. and Mrs. Abbott exchanged quick glances, each read the other's thoughts. Something terrible had happened to their child, and this messenger, knowing the father to be an invalid, had been charged to break it first to the wife.

"Come and tell me immediately," gasped Hugh, gripping her hand with clammy fingers. "I can hardly bear the suspense."

He was wearing a long cloth dressing-gown, and now the heat of it seemed almost oppressive.

"Push the casement back wider," he told Anna, as his wife vanished from the room. "Leave the door open also; I must have air."

She obeyed with flurried movement, convinced in her own mind the master was not long for this world. Then she left him with a backward look.

"You have only to touch the bell, sir," she said. "I shall be listening."

The moment Mrs. Abbott entered the parlour she took an instinctive dislike to the dark-haired man standing in the shadow of the window curtains. His position suggested concealment; he carried a small handbag, which he opened diffidently.

A swift look of relief came into Mrs. Abbott's face. "He is only selling scissors or some such ware," she thought, ready to make short shrift of the intruder.

"What is your business?" she asked, with an air of aloofness.

He drew some pamphlets from his bag and spoke with a strong nasal twang.

"I am engaged on a house-to-house visitation," he declared, advancing with a would-be ingratiating smile. "May I beg you to cast your eye over some beautiful literature, which I offer you free of charge? These leaflets are well worthy your consideration, and if you are sufficiently interested, perhaps you would attend one of our meetings, in which the great Mormon faith will be expounded by one of our most thrilling speakers."

Mrs. Abbott's hands dropped limply, her mouth opened, and her eyes stared like one demented. Gradually to her ashen face there crept a streak of deep crimson, like a vivid scar, while the rising and falling of her breast denoted intense emotion.

"A goodly subject," thought the man; "already she is moved by my words."

Before he realized what she was about to do, she rushed from the room, flew like a whirlwind down the passage, and in at her husband's open door.

"Oh, Hugh!" she gasped, "there's a Mormon missionary in the parlour come to try and convert me. He is standing there with his hands full of tracts, talking in an American accent. I couldn't answer him. I felt as if I wanted to strike him dead."

The words had an electric effect on Mr. Abbott.

He gave a low, deep cry, in which his broken-hearted agony burst forth; then to his wife's utter amazement he leapt from the bed, and with unsteady steps staggered into the narrow hall.

The Mormon, surprised at being left, had just emerged from the parlour to gain the outer door, now vaguely suspicious he had entered an unlikely house. The sight of the infuriated man reeling towards him was so startling that he paused involuntarily. The limbs so recently paralysed were already giving way as Mr. Abbott flung himself on the intruder, gripping him fiercely by the throat.

"Such devils as you have lured my daughter away!" he yelled, beside himself with rage and bitterness. "Where is she? I say; damn you! Where is she?"

The Mormon shook him off easily enough. He would have fallen but for his wife's supporting arms. A strange couple they made, their white faces and angry eyes demanding the stolen ewe lamb. Mrs. Abbott re-echoed the plea—

"Yes, what have you done with our child, you villain? Your lying companions have tempted her away by hypnotism. You have taken all that we loved in the world, and you call yourselves religious!"

The stranger rubbed his throat, which showed the deep marks of Hugh's scarring nails.

"Who are you flying at?" he asked roughly.

"Tearing me about as if I were a wild beast. I never heard of your precious daughter, but if she's come over to godly people and left such terrors as you, she has shown her wisdom. You need not fear for her: if she is in the Mormon fold, she will be led to such holiness as you could never hope to reach."

"Get out of my house, you hypocritical black-guard," thundered Mr. Abbott, "or I'll call the police, who know well enough what work you're up to. If I were stronger I'd thrash my child's seducer within an inch of his life."

The Mormon did not wait to hear any more. Closing his bag he ran from the cottage as if a thousand devils were after him.

Anna had now appeared, adding her support to Mrs. Abbott's uplifting arms. To the startled wife it seemed miraculous that the feet of her bed-ridden husband were planted firmly on the ground, though his knees trembled. Together the woman and the girl enabled him to walk with slow, halting steps into the sitting-room he had not seen for years. But for his crushing sorrow he could have laughed aloud with triumph to feel his limbs at work again. Instinctively he knew they would never now return to utter helplessness. The nervous system, through agony of mind, had received so startling a fillip, that the specialist's prophesied miracle had taken place.

" Oh, Hugh," gasped Mrs. Abbott, " when I saw you rushing down the corridor I thought I must be dreaming. It is the one bit of good that has come out of all this evil ; let us thank God for that."

" Indeed," he gasped, wiping the perspiration from his brow, " it is something to be truly thankful for. I know not what I said in my blinding rage. I dread to think, had I regained my old strength, I might have been guilty of murder! "

" Well, you gave him a good scare," replied Jacinth's mother with satisfaction. " And I think he will carry the marks of your fingers for many a day. Perhaps I ought to send for the doctor to overhaul you ; Anna will run quickly. How surprised he will be ! I could not venture to get you back to your room without his advice."

Mr. Abbott was content to remain in the parlour, almost enjoying his new surroundings despite heartache and suspense. His wife hurried to get tea, her own sorrow lifting a little at Hugh's wonderful achievement.

" If we ever get our darling back she will hardly believe her own eyes," thought the mourning mother. " Basil Hope's goodness has been the saving grace of my reason. But for his telegram, I believe I should have gone out of my mind."

She pictured Jacinth in the Mormon stronghold, fanatically imbibing the creed first taught her in Riverpool. It was well those absent ones could not

know the terrible jeopardy in which their daughter now stood. They trembled for her moral character and future happiness, but dark thoughts of assassination never entered their minds.

Anna returned accompanied by the doctor, whose pleasure and surprise showed how much he cared for his patient of long years' standing. He took tea with the agitated couple, hearing from their own lips the pitiful story of Jacinth's departure.

"You must go easily, and walk for a few minutes every day," said the medical man, when he had assisted Mr. Abbott back to his room. "Now you know your nervous system is capable of recuperation, you may hope in a few months to be as strong as any average man. We shall have you starting off for a change by the sea, a new life begins for you to-day."

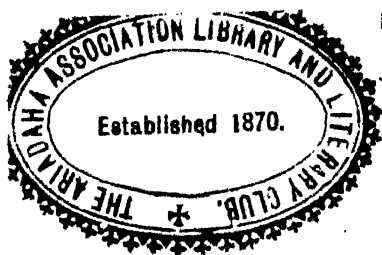
"But the new life has lost its savour," said Hugh Abbott to his wife, as the door closed on the doctor. "I would rather be a helpless cripple, knowing that our Jacinth was safely home, disillusioned by those deceiving Elders."

Anna appeared in the passage and beckoned to Mrs. Abbott. As her mistress obeyed the silent summons, the maid whispered in awe-struck accents—

"A strange thing happened just now in Miss Jacinth's room, ma'am. A huge black crow flew

through the window, and I heard it banging about, making such a shindy, I thought the devil must have got in. I was almost too frightened at first to open the door. Then I plucked up my courage and found this horrid-looking monster banging its head against her looking-glass which it shivered from top to bottom. I managed to shoo the bird out. It seemed like some awful omen of death."

"You must not mention this to your master," said Mrs. Abbott, paling. "He is inclined to be superstitious, and the knowledge would only add to his already distressed condition. I know the breaking of a looking-glass means bad luck; the black bird did not come for nothing. The clouds will not be rising yet!"



CHAPTER XXI

A CRIMSON SIGN

LATE in the afternoon Orson Hoge left Elvaston House to join Ziba in retreat, after giving Wilford some last injunctions. Basil Hope saw him leave the house, having watched every creature coming and going throughout that tedious day.

Wilford felt glad that the two "Saints" had elected to be absent,

"They only fuss me with their everlasting texts," he thought. "One would think they might drop it when business is being discussed. Still, they have been good friends to me, and so long as I make a comfortable living out of them I must not complain."

At one time Wilford had been a footman, and arranged the trays for Hester and Jacinth's evening meals without hesitation.

"Best make them look as dainty as possible," he said to himself, as he spread the clean cloths. "Even suspicious people drink when they are really thirsty, Nature sees to that."

He went first to Hester's darkened room. The

blinds were drawn, and she was seated in a chair with ropes round her body which lashed her to the bedpost. Her hands and feet were also securely fastened, while a tight handkerchief bound across her mouth prevented speech. Thus had she remained since nine o'clock that morning, stiff, tortured, pining for a drop of cooling water.

Wilford addressed her in a kindly tone.

"It wasn't my wish," he said, "that you should be served like this, Mrs. Wayne. Now your husband has left the house, I have ventured, on my own account, to bring you a well-cooked meal, and a large tumbler of sparkling lemonade, instead of the bread and water prescribed. I know you won't give me away. You have always been kind to me in the past, so now I am really glad to be able to make a little return."

As he unfastened the confining ropes and released her gagged mouth, Hester felt thankful she had at least one friend in that house of torture. She was too numb to rise without his support, he helped her with the tenderness of a woman.

"There, there, don't take on so," as she broke into hysterical weeping. "I know you must feel pretty bad, but they told me you were only to undergo one day's penance, so you may hope for better things to-morrow."

With an agonized gasp she flew at the lemonade, and seizing the tumbler with both hands, drank

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feverishly. Her throat was parched, her tongue swollen; as the liquid coursed down she turned grateful eyes to Wilford.

"You may not have lived a good life in the past," she said, "but your action to a dying woman will be remembered in your favour when you are judged. I feel I shall never get over to-day's sufferings. If you had not released me, I couldn't have held out much longer."

She was eating with difficulty, her shaking hand hardly able to convey food to her lips.

"You will feel better when you have had a good sleep between the sheets," Wilford answered reassuringly. "It's wonderful what a night's rest will do in a comfortable bed. Maybe you will wake up quite spry in the morning."

Hester evidently did not share this hopeful view.

"I'm afraid not; they've finished me, Wilford," shaking her head, which racked intolerably. "I am not made of strong enough stuff to rally after this brutal assault. What is that unfortunate Miss Abbott doing? Has she been treated with equal severity?"

"Her penance," he replied, "also consists in solitary confinement, but without the addition of binding ropes. Possibly her mental despair may be equal to your physical sufferings. Take my advice, try not to think of anything now but rest. Lie down

on your bed before you attempt to disrobe, close your eyes, and seek rejuvenating slumber."

Hester was only too thankful to fall in with this counsel. She moved wearily to the massive fourposter, while Wilford took away the dinner tray, bidding her good-night as he relocked the door.

She knew it was useless to plead with him for escape. He was only Ziba's servant, though called a "spiritual brother." She had no money to offer him, and her brain was too weary to think out a means of evading her husband. As Wilford had prophesied, sleep descended upon her like a veil. She never suspected the presence of an overpowering drug, believing her fatigue to be the natural result of long exhaustion.

Now the short, dark man knocked softly at Jacinth's door.

"If you please, miss," he said, "may I bring in your supper?"

A very faint voice answered "Yes." Even that one syllable was uttered with an effort. Jacinth hoped he would not notice her teeth were chattering; she knew her face must be livid with terror. Ever since those awful moments in the secret passage she had awaited with dread the approach of this hour. Though she had never set eyes on Wilford, he was just the type of man she imagined from his voice, the personification of what she had expected, since overhearing his bargain with Ziba and Orson.

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It infuriated her to see his humble manner as he placed the tray beside her, remarking he hoped the fare was to her taste. She glanced down that he might not read the horror in her eyes.

"I am not very hungry," she said, "but the lemonade you have brought me looks delicious. It is my favourite drink."

His face brightened perceptibly.

"I have noticed it is generally liked by ladies," he replied, still in his servile tone. "I come charged with a request which Mr. Wayne hopes you will not refuse. He wished me to recall your kind suggestion made this morning, to succour his unfortunate sister in her sickness. She is too dangerously mad for you to sleep in her room, but it would be very kind if you had the nerve to occupy the adjoining apartment. The door will be locked between you, and it is believed the brain patient may sleep peacefully all night. But should you hear any sound of groaning or unrest, you would be doing a great service by simply touching your electric bell. This will bring a trained attendant on the scene."

Jacinth's heart sank as she struggled to look pleased. How near the ordeal grew!

"I shall be delighted to do anything I can," she replied. "If you will just let me take my evening meal in solitude, I will then move my things back to the dressing-room, which I suppose I shall now find unlocked."

Wilford feared to excite suspicion if he remained in the room watching her eat. Without the faintest sign of anxiety he turned his back on the tray and respectfully withdrew.

No sooner was she alone than she emptied the contents of the drugged glass into a small water bottle on the dressing table. This she concealed in a wardrobe, already partially opened for the purpose of avoiding noise should Wilford be listening. Hastily she ate food to give her strength, her gaoler allowing her good time to enjoy and digest the dainty little supper. Then she heard his knock again, and in a bolder voice bade him "Come in."

The spirit of acting was upon her, she was leaning back in her chair with eyes half closed as if their owner suddenly found the lids too heavy to control. She raised her handkerchief to her lips, and yawned behind it audibly.

"The evening must be rather sultry," she said. "I hardly feel as if I can keep awake. I am quite afraid I should not do for a sick nurse after all."

A look of exultation glowed in the narrow dark eyes of her would-be murderer.

"The charm is working quickly," he thought; "it has a more powerful effect on some systems than others, and conveniently leaves no trace after death."

He asked if he might help take her few possessions

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into the dressing-room. She thanked him, still stifling apparent yawns.

"The patient is quite still," she said, listening at the locked door. "It does not seem as if I should be disturbed."

Wilford paused on the threshold before retiring.

"I hope, miss," he said, "that things may go better for you to-morrow. Although I am a Mormon myself, I do not approve of people being forced to do penance against their will. They say we must bow to all systems of the Church, but I think you will be sure to receive your liberty in the morning."

Jacynth made an effort to appear interested in his sympathy, but her feelings of disgust and contempt were so violent, she was obliged to turn her face away for fear of betraying those very real emotions.

He took her apparent lack of interest as a sign that the drug was working.

No sooner had he retired, than she crept to the window and opened it cautiously.

It was late at night, and a dreary downfall of rain had emptied the street below. Heavy clouds obscured the moon, and above the gloomy street lamps utter darkness reigned.

"No chance of our being rescued this evening," she thought, "since even the keen eyes of a detec-

tive could not now see the handkerchief. Perhaps it is as well, for Wilford is certain to secure the windows, and the darkness will prevent his observing my sign."

Beyond the panes of glass were iron bars. She knotted the red silk scarf tightly to the topmost rung, pushing it to the farthest corner for extra precaution. This done, Jacinth lowered the window without sound, and hurriedly prepared for bed. How violently her heart beat! She let her clothes fall in an untidy heap by the chair, all usual methods of scrupulous neatness were ignored, for every moment she dreaded to hear the return of Ziba's paid assassin. She lay paralysed by suspense, staring at the blind which shielded a God-sent trophy on which her every hope hung. Fervently she prayed for deliverance, but not in the high-flown language of Mormonism. This prayer was a heartbroken utterance, a simple cry to God the deliverer, Whose name had been taken in vain by guilty men.

Wilford went below to await his time, busying himself with putting away the trays and their contents, smiling as he carefully cleaned the empty tumblers lest the faintest drop of liquid should remain as a witness against him. Then, when he felt sure the doomed women would be wrapped in soundest slumber, he returned to their deserted wing, and first opened Hester's door. He knew if Jacinth were awake and heard him moving about, that she

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would mistake his steps for Hester's and try to address the prisoner, whom, he guessed, she did not really believe mad.

Jacinth's sharp ears caught the sound of the turning door handle, knowing Wilford's work had begun.

First he stared at Hester Wayne, lying still dressed on the four-post bed. She looked far more peaceful than when he last saw her awake. She was breathing quite evenly, her head resting on the pillow, her arms outstretched as if to emphasize their relief from cord bondage. Then he turned to a parcel he had brought with him. It contained several sandbags to be fastened round Hester's door, so that he could slip out, leaving his work undisturbed. Large strips and sheets of brown paper lay in a pile, ready to block all air from the windows and Jacinth's outer door. Quickly he got to work, making Hester's room proof against the faintest possible draught. Then he unlocked the connecting door and stole into the tiny dressing-room, where Jacinth lay apparently in a sound, child-like sleep. Her face was turned to the wall, one arm partially covering her features. She heard him approach, bend over her so that his breath fanned her cheek. He stayed in this attitude for some seconds, which seemed to Jacinth like a long hour of agonized suspense, then he moved back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I never knew it fail," he thought, "specially

on weakened systems ; they will both have a beautiful death, nothing more humane could possibly have been concocted."

Jacinth heard him fumbling at her door and window, pasting the brown paper as quickly as possible over every crack. She felt he must hear the thud of her fast-beating heart. She struggled against deadly faintness, a new terror suddenly suggesting itself. If she lost consciousness through fear, the gas would do its deadly work, then she and Hester could never hope to wake and accuse their enemies. Vividly she remembered her words to Hester last night, hoping for an opportunity to repay the Mormon woman's kindness. The opportunity would indeed be missed if her physical powers gave out. Hester had nearly lost her life through warning an innocent girl of the much-married saint's perfidy.

Now, Wilford was moving towards the gas. Raising his hand, he turned on the full current and fled from the room, purposely leaving the outer door unlocked for the first time since Hester's imprisonment. Quick as lightning, Jacinth flew into the room, already faintly poisoned by the fumes, which instantly ceased at the touch of her trembling hand. Hester had been dragged to the floor and was lying as arranged by Orson Hoge. The panting girl bent down and felt her heart ; it was beating regularly, no sign of collapse adding to Jacinth's terror.

"If my red flag of danger does its work," she thought exultingly, "then we are saved, but should the detective have wearied of the watch, God knows what these murderers will do next."

CHAPTER XXII

THE PROTECTION OF THE LAW

CARSON began to feel concerned about Basil Hope. Such frenzied anxiety possessed the young man in his fear and love for Jacinth, that a few days more of such tension might undermine his health and prey upon his reason.

All day he had wanted Carson to enter the house by force, and insist on seeing Jacinth Abbott. But this professional authority on crime explained they had no excuse for such an unusual proceeding. The girl had left home of her own accord, and when he spoke to her the previous night she was apparently enjoying the Mormon's hospitality.

"We have no reason to think she is unhappy at the present time," Carson declared, as the two men partook of a dreary dinner in the Tottenham lodgings, Basil refusing to leave even for an hour.

"Jacinth might come out," he said, "and the moment she emerges from that door, whoever she is with, I shall go up and speak to her. She will not listen to me for my own sake, but I might frighten her about her father's health. Mrs. Abbott sent

me the most distressing telegram. One can easily picture the parents' agony of mind."

Carson sighed as he lit a cigarette, while Basil sipped strong coffee to keep him awake during the night.

"Whatever you say will be of no use if she is still under hypnotic influence," Carson told the distracted lover. "I hope you are going to try and sleep, at least till daybreak, for it's not much use this dark night peering about for invisible handkerchiefs. How long do you intend keeping up this watch? Probably Miss Abbott has informed Wayne of my brief conversation with her in the theatre, for that reason he has advised her to keep indoors to-day."

At the mention of sleep Basil indulged in a wan smile, which veiled some hidden thought not yet made known to Carson.

"You detectives are very clever," he said, "but I am sure love is the best sharpener of wits. I have thought out a way by which I can keep the opposite windows under my eye, from time to time, during this night. I could not sleep, thinking that the red handkerchief might call in vain. You can't tell what tricks that dreadful self-named Apostle may not be up to. Of course, in his own lawless way, he may well love a beautiful girl like Jacinth. His amorous intentions towards her might give her a nasty fright, should he have any vile scheme on foot, when the rest of the household have retired."

"You fear everything," said Carson lightly, "but I fancy Miss Abbott would have sense enough to securely fasten her door."

"Skeleton keys," muttered Basil, "skeleton keys."

Carson, seeing it was impossible to lighten his companion's depression, resorted to the evening papers, which he read until bedtime.

"I think I'll turn in now," he said, seeking the young man, who sat by the open window gazing into the darkness. His clothes were wet, but he did not appear to notice the fact or suffer any discomfort. A clearing shower had just swept the streets, and now the incessant patter of raindrops ceased.

"If you sit up all night in those damp clothes you may get rheumatic fever," said Carson. "I wonder if any woman is worth all the worry you are enduring."

Basil tried to laugh at his own expense.

"You will think so when you are in love," he answered. "You see our engagement has been a long one; I worshipped her when she was a mere child; she was all I had in the world."

Carson felt that sympathy would only make matters worse, so he moved away, repeating his brief good-night.

Basil called him quickly back.

"I say, Carson, wait a minute. I want to try an experiment before you undress. I sent for some small

magnesium lights to-day, sufficient to illuminate the house opposite. I mean to try one now, and get a good look at those windows. The street is practically empty, and the few soaked pedestrians will only think some young fellows are skylarking up here."

"Anything to relieve your mind," Carson replied, rather amused at Basil's ingenuity.

"I asked especially for white lights," said Basil, "since I think they are less noticeable, and more likely to show up the presence of the red handkerchief, should it be there." "

He drew his treasures from a box concealed beneath the table. He had little hope they would reveal anything fresh, but the endeavour might bring peace of mind.

Carson humoured him, getting the matches, and remarking jokingly—

"I did not know we were to turn this into a fifth of November affair."

Basil held his breath, setting his teeth as he leant forward with elbows on the sill, holding aloft the dazzling firework. His eyes were starting from his head as they swept the high wall opposite, dotted with dark windows. A cry escaped him, as the red handkerchief, damp and drooping, caught his eager gaze. Simultaneously he saw Jacinth's agonized face at the window, while her hands gesticulated wildly, as if beckoning for help.

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Carson also saw the vision of a pallid girl standing terror-struck by the casement, quickly noting the position of that particular window.

"The third from the right," he said aloud, as he rushed to the telephone, ringing up the nearest police station.

Eager for the fray, Basil's pale face now flushed crimson, he could hardly wait for Carson to send his orders. The few moments' delay appeared intolerable to the man who had seen his dear one's face convulsed with terror. Speedily Carson and Basil crossed the road and knocked peremptorily at Elvaston House, pealing the bell with such violence that Wilford, who was still up, started guiltily.

He was sitting in a pantry at the back of the house, and had not seen the light which startled the young, newly-baptized women on the top floor. Again the insistent summons pealed through the building.

"Maybe," thought Wilford, "Wayne and Hoge have returned. Knowing they left orders the door must be bolted, they cannot fall back on their latchkeys. I thought they were nervous when they slunk out of the kitchen door and through the yard at the back of the house, before joining the baptismal candidates."

With a sense of deep uneasiness Wilford hurried to the hall.

"We don't want visitors here this evening," he thought, "of all nights in the year."

His acting powers warned him he had better adopt a cheerful expression. The moment he saw the two men on the threshold were strangers, he smiled affably, asking in a joking voice what on earth they wanted with him at this unusual hour.

"We have come to see Miss Abbott," said Basil, breathlessly. "Take us to her at once; she is in some distress."

Despite his forced smile, Wilford turned deadly pale.

"I don't know what you mean," he muttered. "Miss Abbott left the house this morning. She has gone to Utah with a band of Saints."

"You are lying!" hissed the infuriated lover. "This house has been watched all day; she has never left it to our certain knowledge. We saw a number of other girls coming in and out. Miss Abbott was not amongst them."

Carson had taken care to plant his foot in the doorway, while this argument was in progress.

"You forget we have a back door," muttered Wilford doggedly. "She preferred to go that way, since she didn't want any relations fussing after her."

"Enough of your inventions," said Basil hotly. "I saw her just now with my own eyes, and my friend here marked the window. We are going to her room, whether you object or not."

A look of utter amazement caught Wilford's

usually mobile features in a sudden vice of paralysed terror.

"Go to her room!" he gasped. "Impossible! Two strange men at this hour!"

So far Carson had not spoken. He was listening with secret diversion to Basil's amateur efforts to force entry. Now he took the matter into his own hands.

"You decline to let us in," he asked casually, as if prepared to retreat, if Wilford answered in the affirmative.

Encouraged by his mildness, the Elvaston House attendant made a bold reply.

"Most certainly," he said in rough accents. "I don't know who you are. Clear off. I can't have you keeping respectable people out of their beds."

He accompanied the words with a yawn. Instantly Carson gave a low whistle. At this signal a band of policemen, already mustered just out of sight round the corner, tramped up the steps.

"Stand back!" thundered Carson. "We enter in the name of the law."

Wilford staggered against the wall, his knees knocking together, his jaw dropping, his forehead moist. He had ever a wholesome dread of blue-coated visitors. Now their presence appeared like some diabolical nightmare. He cursed himself for his folly in saying Miss Abbott was absent, seeing his

lie would be discovered in the morning when her body was found. He had been taken off his guard and spoke at random, thinking these visitors counted for nothing.

"It was impossible," he told himself, "they could have seen the drugged Jacinth, that was mere bluff." So he lied on to his own undoing.

"Don't let that man out of your sight," whispered Carson to a constable. "He may try to escape, so keep a sharp eye on him."

Carson had made such a good calculation as to the room's locality, that he went straight to the wing shut off by the heavy sliding door, with its formidable bolt. It took but a second to shoot back this barrier and enter the dark passage. At the sound of approaching feet, Jacinth dashed out through Hester's room with wild cries of help.

In a moment she felt herself clasped by Basil's protecting arms.

"My darling," he gasped passionately, "what have they been doing to you?"

Carson's voice was heard above the general confusion—

"Secure the servant," he cried, "but don't strike a light, I smell an escape of gas."

Wilford felt himself pinioned against the wall. In his heart he cursed Wayne and Orson with a deadly oath.

"They were trying to murder us," gasped Jacinth.
 "Hester Wayne is insensible. I turned off the gas immediately I was alone; that man believed he had drugged me too. I broke one of my panes of glass. If you can get the windows open, the air will be clear enough in a minute."

The police, guided by Jacinth, made their way through Hester's room, avoiding the prostrate body on the floor. A swift current of air soon dispelled the remaining odour, which none had noticed save Carson. Then, when the would-be deadly gas-jet was once again illuminated, proofs of the story which Jacinth stammered out were visible to the assembly.

"Hester Wayne," said the girl, raising the limp hand, "is only drugged; she was to have died, like myself, from an escape of gas. I heard the whole devilish plot concocted in Zibâ Wayne's study. Hester told me the day before of a secret passage leading to that room. I can show it you now, to prove my words. I have saved, too, the drink which the wretched Wilford brought me to-night for supper. He thought I drank it, but it is really concealed in the cupboard opposite."

Wilford groaned aloud when he heard the words. Now he knew he had indeed been checkmated; both Hester and Jacinth would live to testify against their tormentors.

"Hester Wayne has been imprisoned here all

day," continued Jacinth. "I tried to escape last night, but was shut up in this wing. I could not get to the front windows to hang out the handkerchief, until it was dark. Oh, and then the letter! Look on the dressing-table and you will see Ziba's forgery. Hester never wrote a word of that lying message. She only wanted to get away and tell the world of Mormon abominations. She opened my eyes to their enormities. She showed me I was hypnotized. That was late last night after the theatre, before Ziba caught us on our way to the hall door."

Jacinth had hardly strength enough to reel out the words so full of useful information. Still helped by Basil's supporting arm, the trembling girl assisted Carson in his quick, business-like investigations. After taking possession of the letter and leaving a guard with the unconscious Hester, he made a tour of the secret passage, and handed the glass bottle of drugged lemonade to one of his assistants.

"The whole house must be placed under arrest," he said, "and a doctor sent for immediately to attend this drugged woman. I should advise her being taken in an ambulance to the nearest hospital. This is going to be a big job."

Already Wilford was throwing the blame on Orson and Ziba.

"They will return in the morning," he said;

"they must be charged with attempted murder. I was hypnotized, the same as Miss Abbott."

His quick brain had instantly seized the idea from Jacinth. Carson smiled satirically.

"That will probably be judged by your past record," he replied.

Jacinth, as yet, had hardly time to wonder why Basil was there. Surely he could not love her still, after her infidelity. Exhausted by the horrors of the night, she felt content just to know that he was near, to realize life had been given back to her, since deliverance had come from the jaws of death.

The hastily-summoned doctor asked Jacinth so many questions that her brain swam. As if in a dream, she followed Hester as they carried her to a conveyance. A crowd of terrified girls from the floor above appeared in a huddled mass on the staircase.

What were the police doing? Was there a fire? They had seen a bright light at the window only a short time ago. One of the converts felt convinced the light was a ray of glory proclaiming the end of the world. Others were palpably confused at finding this saintly establishment raided by police.

Carson addressed the frightened group in a kindly, reassuring voice.

"You are all under the protection of the law,"

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he told them, "and perfectly safe. We shall see no harm befalls you, though you are lodging in the house of murderers. Two lives have been saved, and you can now sleep peacefully in your beds. To-morrow you will be securely escorted back to your homes, and the danger from which you have been snatched made public property."

A pitiful sound of wailing greeted the intelligence, as the disillusioned converts wept upon each other's shoulders. Jacinth had not the strength to speak a word of comfort. She let Basil lead her away, still telling him brokenly of the trials she had passed through.

Fondly he whispered that his devotion would dispel the awful recollection of this night, repeating his vow of eternal love as if no cloud had ever risen between them.

In his own joy at this strange re-union he did not forget her parents' agony.

"Early in the morning we will telegraph for your mother," he declared, "saying all is well. She and your father have been terribly anxious; they knew something was wrong."

"How I have made you all suffer!" murmured Jacinth, with a sob. "I was like another person, possessed, bewitched, absolutely under the control of a devil."

"I knew it," said Basil quickly. "I warned your

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mother of some uncanny influence that last night I saw you before our engagement was broken. She would not believe me then; people often believe too late."

CHAPTER XXIII

A WISH REVERSED

ZIBA passed a miserable night. Early in the morning he went to Orson's room, rousing him from sound slumber.

Elder Hoge was always a good sleeper, and woke with a start, to find the haggard-faced brother bending over him with an expression of fear. Springing up, he asked breathlessly if anything was wrong.

"Whatever is wrong lies in myself," said Ziba, sitting on the bed and wiping his brow. "I have been strangely troubled with a spirit of restlessness. I tried to distract my mind from unpleasant visions by writing an address, but terrible words of condemnation for those who kill came to my mind, causing a painful uneasiness. I slept for a few moments and heard this text whispered in my ear— 'The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'"

Orson glanced at the clock, annoyed at being disturbed so early. He rubbed his eyes as he slowly digested Ziba's speech, then he said—

"Brother, you must have been thinking of the now deceased Hester. She is sharing the punishment meted out to sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars. Her wickedness was great, but the presence of this evil sister shall never trouble us more."

Ziba still looked depressed as he retorted:—

"It had to be done; she would never have forsaken her unrighteous thoughts. She took pleasure in all manner of abominations, and turned from the faith which could have saved her soul. Yet, that same voice which spoke to me in my dreams came like the spirit of the Prophet Ezekiel thundering— 'Say unto them, as I live; said the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' Orson, you know quite well God will not be mocked. Despite my great zeal, I may have erred in so hastily destroying the wife of my youth. I know why I did it; she interfered between Jacinth and myself, and the face of that young maiden is to me as the brightness of the sun. Without its smiles I should be doomed to sudden destruction. Her beauty has such an astounding influence over me, that sometimes I become speechless as I gaze upon its charms."

Orson was gradually waking up, resigning himself to the fact Ziba had no intention of letting him

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sleep again. Still cross at the intrusion, he spoke harshly—

“ You have fallen into the error of folly, my beloved friend. You declined to listen to a timely warning I gave you, turning deaf ears to my entreaties. This strange Riverpool woman who departed from all belief in our religion was as a snare unto you. But let me assure you that the Lord will come out in judgment upon Jäcynth Abbott, and destroy her from the face of the earth. Her wretched life might have been saved had you consented to cast her off for ever. Your fellow saints, linked to you in godly work, could not see you bruised and blinded by an infidel. Her arms about your neck would have dragged you back from pursuing our glorious work as a shining light upon Mount Zion. Know that she has been smitten with a curse, and will be snatched from your hands, so that the ministry be not defiled by one tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. She would have demoralized you by her cunning craftiness. Her kisses made you forget your high position in the priesthood. Had you been joined to a transgressor you would have broken the everlasting covenant. Then must your dwelling have been made desolate, grievous wolves entering your fold, not sparing the flock in Utah. You might, through mesmerism, have lured Miss Abbott away, but in time, when the influence weakened, she would have breathed forth damnable

heresies. Katrine, and others dear to you, might have fallen victims to her pernicious teaching. Hester's life would have been demanded at your hands, the young infidel's condemning words bringing, not only you, but Brother Wilford and myself, to swift destruction. We loved you too well to leave you in this danger. We noted an outwardly fair woman perverting the Book of Mormon, sorely troubling you, and following her own pernicious ways, so that our truths should be evil spoken of. I could see it was in her heart to make merchandise of you. She was bound to injure the inspired servant of the Lord."

Ziba's figure was gradually stiffening as he listened. His face first turned red with rising annoyance, then paled to the livid whiteness of intense rage.

"What is all this talk leading up to?" he asked haughtily. "It is something new for a lesser light to lecture an apostle. If you intend evil towards my fiancée, let me tell you once and for all that the combined powers of heaven and hell could not keep her from my arms. I fear, dear Brother Orson, you have an unclean spirit. If you, even in thought, injure Jacinth Abbott, I, with my powers of healing, will work on opposite lines, and infect you with disease. You shall be taken with palsies, you shall be lame, crippled by my will. I like not at all the tone of your speech; you are no longer a witness-

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bearer of godly revelations. Maybe, as with Hester, jealousy has overcome you. I know it is not often given to man to possess so seductive a damsel. I would wed Jacinth, even in an unbelieving state, seeing she could be saved by my purity. I shall taste the sweets of love, draining the cup to its glorious dregs. I will feel her in my arms though she fight me to the death. I will kiss her till the breath goes out of her body, burying my face in the sweetness of her hair. She cannot cry out while sealed by my lips. I will call for a cloudy pillar to descend, and stand about us, as it did at the door of the Tabernacle. She shall be hidden in me, as Moses of old was hid in the cleft of the rock. Women love to be conquered, men are their task-masters. Such a little creature could do me no harm; you insult my strength by trying to make me fear a woman."

"You feared Hester," said Orson, whose wrath was now rising, "dreaded her enough to silence her accusing lips for ever. Your feeble defence against this love weakness makes me fear that, like the Gentiles, you have inherited 'lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.' Still, you have a deliverer in me. I am your best friend. Listen, brother, and let not anguish rend your heart. Jacinth Abbott will no longer prove an occasion of stumbling. Wilford and I have swept her from your path. You paid that man to commit murder, expecting him to

leave a woman alive who would witness against us all three. I was surprised that any one possessed of ordinary intelligence could expect such directions to be executed. Of course Wilford has removed the girl also. They are both to die in adjoining rooms from gas suffocation. Therefore you are safe, and can now repent of the evil over which you have just gloated, namely, your passionate desires towards one who reviled 'Mormonism.'

A cry resembling that of a savage beast pierced by the huntsman's spear, escaped Ziba's lips as the horrible truth flashed through his brain.

"He has killed my angel! You have let him murder her!" he hissed. "Impossible; I'll not believe you. Seizing Orson roughly by the shoulders and dragging him from the bed, he shook him as a terrier might a rat.

Elder Hoge was muscular, and returned the assault with violence. Together the two men attacked each other in true hooligan fashion. Then suddenly Ziba broke away, and burst into a wild fit of hysterical weeping.

"My only love," he groaned, "my adored one on earth, you, sweet Jacinth, shall be avenged. God could not be so cruel as to rob me of my treasure. He is good to His servant, and I may yet find you alive."

Ziba rushed from the room, and hastily donning his clothes, fled from the house parting and weeping,

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followed at a respectful distance by Orson Hoge, who now feared his friend's agitation might arouse suspicion.

"I will take the same train to Tottenham," thought Orson, "and try to get speech with him again before he arrives at Elvaston House. He may pull himself together when I warn him of the hangman's rope. This slight fit of petulance will soon wear off; Ziba was ever an emotional man."

Orson did not make his presence known until the sorrowing lover was nearing the abode of death. Then he came softly behind and linked his arm through that of the now composed saint. Ziba looked at him with eyes of undying hatred.

"For expediency's sake we had better appear to be friends," he muttered. "This tragic end to my love-story will not be so easily wiped out. I shall reckon with you and Wilford later."

Deathly white, with trembling hand, Ziba pealed the familiar bell, having first tried his key with non-success. He was not surprised when a policeman opened the door. "The devilish plot has worked," he thought. "My darling is lying stiff and cold above, a victim to Hester's treachery. How can I bear to look on the motionless face? Will my brain stand the agony of the inquest?"

As the two men entered, feigning a look of bewilderment, the policeman, accompanied by two or

three companions, asked if he were Ziba Wayne. "That is my name," replied the apostle; "may I ask your business in this godly establishment? Brother Hoge and myself are amazed at the presence of such unexpected visitors. Has there been a burglary?"

As he uttered Orson's name, and acknowledged his own, the constable in charge made a sign to his attendants, who quickly stepped forward, and before the Elders realized their intention, fastened handcuffs on their wrists.

"What the devil are you doing?" shouted Ziba hoarsely.

"There is some lamentable mistake," gasped Hoge, quaking.

The constable lost no time in briefly explaining the charge. "You are arrested," he said, "for complicity in the attempted murders of Mrs. Wayne and Miss Jacinth Abbott."

"Murder?" cried Ziba indignantly; "who could possibly accuse Latter-Day Saints of anything so atrocious?"

"Miss Abbott accuses you both," replied the representative of the law, adding his customary warning that any hurriedly-made statement would be used against the prisoners.

In this moment of horror, Hoge, though petrified by fear, could not resist one look which seemed to say—

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' Was I not right ? I tried to save you from this woman ; now she is proving our destruction."

Ziba's eyes fell. So the fair enchantress he had yearned for was alive, though with swift infidelity he heartily wished her dead.



CHAPTER XXIV

A REAL HERO

BASIL HOPE was full of plans for the immediate future. In Jacinth's exhausted condition he told her none of his secret arrangements, to be submitted for her approval the following day. His landlady, who had taken a deep interest in the two young men, soon realized that something highly sensational had occurred in connection with the house opposite.

Basil begged her to quickly arrange the most comfortable room she had vacant for his unexpected visitor.

"Miss Abbott's mother will be here to-morrow," he said. "She has passed through a terrible time. Perhaps you will make an effort to take special care of my young guest, seeing she is without a chaperone to-night, and suffering from recent alarm."

Jacinth thanked him warmly for all his consideration, assuring him that, despite the shock to her nerves, she would now be able to rest.

Basil was also sorely in need of sleep. His late watching had told upon him, and he could still hardly realize his dear one was safe under the same roof.

The following morning a reply telegram from Mrs. Abbott stated she had left Liverpool by an early train, expressing heartfelt thanks to Basil for the good news contained in his wire.

When Jacinth woke, her first thought was for Hester. She dressed hurriedly, sending word to Basil's room that she wished to go at once to the hospital in the hope of seeing Mrs. Wayne. He hastened to join his guest at breakfast. Jacinth was alone in the small sitting-room from which he had flashed the timely illumination on the previous evening. He thought her looking pathetically pale and thin, the triumph of youth preventing her wan appearance from proving unbecoming. Her large, deeply-fringed eyes wore a new expression of shyness, as if they feared to meet his longing gaze. She stood accused by her own conscience. The thought of Ziba's recent love-making was now agony to her soul. She half wished Basil would reproach her, keenly aware she deserved censure at his hands. It would have been easier to face his wrath and scorn than the swift forgiveness, the tender consideration, and unaltered trust. Well she knew that the average man would have cast her off with bitter vituperation, laughing at the idea that hypnotism had

played a sinister part in the threatened ruin of their lives. It was so wonderful of Basil to understand; it showed how entirely he was one with herself.

He did not try to kiss her as he took both her hands in his own, and drew her to the breakfast table.

"Carson went out half an hour ago," said Basil, as she seated herself behind the coffee pot. "This almost feels like being married, doesn't it, Jacinth?"

A faint smile parted her lips as the colour rushed to her cheeks. Was he mocking at her? Now she turned inquiring eyes in his direction. Basil answered the look with a hurried flow of words—

"Of course, we shall be married quickly now, if you still care for me. Perhaps your love has not yet revived, and I am too hasty in my request. I only want to blot out this dark time of separation, to put it entirely behind us, and try to think all is just the same as in the old days."

"Oh! no," gasped Jacinth quickly, "it isn't just the same."

For a moment his face fell.

"You see," she continued breathlessly, "I love you a thousand times more. I was often cold, so cold, because I had not fathomed how deeply you really cared. I thought you would never speak to me again if I came out of last night's ordeal alive. I looked forward to my parents' forgiveness, but never expected so much as a kind word from you,

Even now I wonder if it is only a tantalizing dream, or a trick to repay me more fully for the pain I inflicted."

A great joy broke over Basil's face. Out of these days of sorrow a new wonder sprang. Jacinth had developed from a mere girl into a feeling, thinking, serious woman. Never before had such sympathy linked their hearts. It was something more than passion which stirred him as he drew the now tearful Jacinth into his arms.

"If you want to please me," he whispered tenderly, "never breathe another word against yourself. You cannot imagine what life meant to me when your love was stolen away. I became savage in my hatred for the man who robbed me of your heart. I knew him to be a cowardly ruffian who disguised his baseness under the veneer of religion. Perhaps he told you I waylaid him one night in a lane, and thrashed him mercilessly. I marked his face; you must have seen the cut of my whip."

In a flash the scene rushed back to Jacinth's mind of a hypnotized girl called down in the night to a moonlight tryst. How quickly Ziba explained away the mark she observed beneath his muffler! The man she had thought so strong was a weak and lying prophet, the lover she despised a real hero, without whose aid she must have been lost. She had discovered the previous evening that Carson

was in Basil's employ, so to him she owed the good work done by a Riverpool detective.

"Every moment I discover something fresh," she exclaimed, "but, oh! I must tell you what is troubling me so much. Besides all the anxiety I have caused, you have probably spent your hard-earned savings in rescuing me from danger. You retained the services of an expensive detective, leaving your business, to follow me here. Perhaps your chief will dismiss you for negligence; it will mean our marriage may be further postponed."

Her lips quivered as she sighed deeply at the thought. If only she might never be parted again from Basil! She clung to him as if she could not let him go.

"Money is not everything in this world," he answered. "Are you prepared to face a struggle? Will you take me just as I stand to-day, even though I confess I have lost my position in the firm?"

She felt his hands tighten on her wrists. The tension of that moment meant much to the man testing Jacinth's real devotion.

"Basil," she whispered, "if you had not a penny in the world I would take you, work for you, and be prouder of you than if I were marrying a millionaire. I owe you my life, and, such as it is, I will consecrate every year that remains to try and prove my gratitude. Father and mother will surely feel the same.

But for your rescue I doubt whether they would have seen me again on earth. If we cannot afford to have a home of our own I shall suggest their finding a corner for us in Briar Cottage. Don't mind, dearest, about the work. You are so clever, you will find another berth in time. Fortunately, we are both young and strong."

Basil's heart gave a great bound as he listened to her brave words.

"No need for such sacrifices," he cried. "I left the firm of my own accord, because, without you, Riverpool became intolerable. You know that old saying, 'When one door shuts another opens'? On the very day I made my final decision, I heard my uncle in Australia had died, leaving me a private income of seven hundred a year."

A cry of amazement broke from Jacinth's lips. She sprang to her feet, with hands clasped and eyes dilated.

"Is it really true, Basil? You came into this money and still cared for me. You ask me to share your love and fortune. Why, it means we could be married at once."

"Within three days, by special licence, if you are ready," he answered eagerly. "Listen, this is my idea. You have a very difficult time before you. Carson says there will be a big trial, which may prove the means of effectively abolishing Mormon missionaries from England. The parts which you

and Hester Wayne must play in these law proceedings will be heavy. Ziba, Wilford, and Hoge must all be tried for complicity in their vile attempt to murder two defenceless women. It will be a sensational hearing. I want you to face the court as a married woman, that I may be near to support and protect you. I know your parents will give their consent, and it will show the world what confidence I place in you."

Now Jacinth could not speak. She buried her face in her hands, and her frame shook with uncontrollable sobs. These last words of trust and love were too much for the over-wrought frame. Basil knew how her name had been blown upon in Liverpool: In shame she recalled Arabella Piper's letter of righteous wrath to Mrs. Abbott, and the old woman's harsh words of condemnation when she met her with Maggie in the road. A bitter sting lay in the knowledge they were deserved.

As Basil's wife, she could face the public with new dignity, the follies of girlhood shaken off with the responsibilities of her marriage vows. Basil guessed just how she felt, and tactfully waited till she regained composure.

Then enthusiastically they discussed exciting plans for the future. So soon as he could arrange the necessary preliminaries, she was ready to link her life with his. She almost forgot her intention of visiting Hester. Now recalling her previous resolve,

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she hastily finished her breakfast, and, escorted by Basil, drove to the hospital.

There she found the tortured woman of yesterday refreshed by the long drugged sleep which gave Nature a chance to recuperate. The kindly faces of the nurses, the cheerful ward, seemed like heaven after incarceration in Elvaston House.

Very gently Jacinth explained all the happenings of the previous day to the woman rescued from murderous hands. She told how Hester's hurried words about the private passage had been the means of saving both their lives.

"How like Ziba!" declared Hester, when Jacinth described the forged letter, exonerating himself and making her confess to suicide. "At least he was a man of method, and never let a point slip. But for you, the girl I so hated at first, and afterwards pitied, I should now have carried my sins into another world. God grant I may be spared to redeem my past life and try to rescue some of my miserable sisters in Utah. We must make a point of giving those girls a chance who embraced Mormonism through your influence, Jacinth. I know just how to follow up Maggie Piper, for instance. If she wishes to return, we will enable her to escape from the pitiful bonds of polygamy. What will they do to Ziba and his confederates? Have you any idea?"

Jacinth shook her head.

"It is impossible to say," she replied, "but of

course they will all get long terms of imprisonment, the evidence is so undeniable. They are lucky to escape with their lives, and the longer they remain in prison the better for the world at large. You must try and regain your strength quickly. You remember saying you wished to testify against the Elders. Now you will be given a chance you could never have expected. Mormonism in England should shiver and die under your words of exposure."

"Yet I could never tell half," answered Hester, closing her eyes, as a look of mental anguish passed over her features. "It will be difficult to face Ziba in the dock, but we must both be strong, my child, the girl and the woman whom the devilish Wilford prepared for death in the guise of a friend. I thought he was really sorry for me that night; perhaps he played the same game on you."

Jacinth gave a brief account of the words that passed between them, then, half timidly, she told Hester that she would no longer be a girl when the trial came on. Mrs. Wayne could hardly conceal her amazement, as her young visitor described Basil's devotion.

"Love is a wonderful thing," she declared, "as you know it here. Would to God I had been born in England, far from the curse of plural wifehood. I can only pray my experience may retard the designs of its leaders, and snatch unwary converts from the baleful influence of Mormon impostures. If so, my

sufferings will not have proved altogether useless. The anguish and misery I experienced when I heard you addressing me yesterday from the passage, passes description. Yet Ziba would say my gagged mouth and tortured limbs were in accordance with the counsels of the Church. My death was planned on the lines of 'Blood Atonement,' the two most hideous words in our Mormon vocabulary. I should have suspected I was drugged, but for the torpid numbness which followed those racked hours which seemed like weeks of pain. It is surprising I lived through the frightful paroxysms produced by such brutal treatment."

Jacinth saw that even speaking of it excited Hester so pressing a kiss on her forehead, said Basil was waiting, and slipped noiselessly away. Hester turned to a nurse who was bringing some light refreshment.

"That is the young girl," she whispered, "whom my Mormon husband would have taken as a fourth wife, had I not warned her in time. You can imagine how such conduct strikes like the knell of death to one's soul. But now a judgment has fallen upon him, he has been arrested this morning, his career of crime ends to-day."



CHAPTER XXV

HIS LIFE OF LIES

JACINTH was so busy being interviewed by detectives and newspaper reporters, that it hardly seemed possible her mother could be due from Liverpool in so short a time. Tremblingly she awaited the clasp of maternal arms. Would she ever be able to explain the real reason of her apparent falseness? What if Mrs. Abbott scorned the idea of Ziba's sinister power? Certainly the trick played upon her parents of a fictitious situation in Germany, might prove hard to overlook. She also feared the recent strain would throw her father back, and increase the weakness of his paralysed limbs. Basil knew she was growing nervous as the hour of reunion approached.

"Mother may be very tired after her long, lonely journey," she said. "I dare say all the anxiety will have quite upset her. Thank goodness, she can now lean upon me. The doctor who attended Hester was quite surprised I had not entirely broken down."

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"Youth is a great factor where strain is concerned," replied Basil, "and I like to think my love helped a little in reviving your flagging spirits."

"Your love, and the good news too," added Jacinth with a fond smile. "Have you any news of Ziba and his confederates?"

"Yes, Carson talked to them at the police station, and found them in a state of utter collapse. They began quoting texts and conversing in Biblical language, but the constables would have none of such jargon. The elders will find it difficult to get any counsel to defend them. The present impression is that they must plead guilty. Carson says that Ziba Wayne is writing you a letter. May I entreat you not to answer it on any account?"

Quickly Jacinth gave the desired promise.

"If it would make you happy, I will tear it up unopened," she declared. "I hate the very thought of his handwriting. I should always associate it with his early vows of love to the poor woman whose murder he planned in such cold-blooded fashion."

"Let us read it together," suggested Basil, "we can afford to smile now at his overwhelming conceit."

As they waited at the window for Mrs. Abbott's arrival, a special messenger brought Ziba's last words to his accuser.

"False child of sin," it ran, "I am told you have turned against me like a viper warmed in my bosom. You drew from me a great flood of human

passion. You made me love as I have never loved before, then, despite my godly teaching, delivered a heavenly-inspired apostle into the hands of wicked men. I may be imprisoned, like St. Paul, by reason of your heresies, but even confining walls will not deaden my bright and shining light. I try to bear up with fortitude, knowing that all earthly joys must end; and my brow is well fitted for a martyr's crown. In the court of justice I shall face you again, and you will read a holy condemnation in my eyes. At least I have conferred on you an undying benefit, my devotion snatched you from the arms of that miserable specimen of manhood, Basil Hope. In years to come you will remember, to your lasting good, my inspired teaching. You may pretend to the world that Mormonism has no hold over you, but in reality you can never entirely escape from its enlightening influence. Reflect before you raise your voice against me. Know that in thought, if I would, I could strike you dead. I spare you because you were once dear to my heart, and sweet as an honeycomb. Even now I cling to the belief that you have not entirely forsaken me. The crime of which I stand accused, is condoned by our glorious faith, since spiritual discernment was given to me and angel guardians directed my actions. I and my two brothers will plead extenuating circumstances when we own ourselves guilty in the eyes of the Gentiles. We need no earthly speaker to

espouse our cause, or conduct our case, since hosts of unseen beings and chariots of fire will overshadow the earthly precincts of the law. As to that cursed woman Hester, Mormon vengeance will eternally damn her soul. Fly from her as from the plague; she has brought you to great transgression in the past. I adjure you to turn deaf ears when she breathes forth hatred and malice in the coming ordeal. You will see my splendid courage visibly displayed. I shall stand as an example for all generations. Men will marvel at my fortitude, and possibly profit by the example of my saintship. I do not ask you to answer these words, I only bid you bury them in your heart.—Yours in the spirit of power, ZIBA, the Apostle of Latter-Day Saints."

Jacinth drew a deep breath as they laid the letter down.

"What a horrible tragedy that he should blaspheme to the end!" she murmured, as Basil pushed away the closely-written sheets.

"A life of lies cannot be shaken off in a moment," he said. "Such talk will only intensify the public disgust against him, and hasten the jury's verdict. Keep this last fulsome admonition, on the chance of its being needed in the case. It shows well the manner of man that justice has to deal with. His vaunting conceit makes me sick. I wonder what good he expected to do himself, by writing such loathsome sentiments."

So engrossed were the lovers over this strange epistle, they had not noticed a taxi draw up to the house. Now the servant appeared, looking rather flurried.

"A lady and gentleman have called," she said. "They asked to see you at once on the ground floor, so I showed them into a parlour which my mistress said she would gladly place at your disposal."

"Who can they be?" asked Jacinth. "Did not they give a name?"

The maid shook her head, and waiting for no further discussion Jacinth hurried downstairs. As she entered the little room, a cry of bewilderment escaped her.

"Father! Father!"

She rushed forward into the arms of the man who stood leaning on his wife's shoulder, hardly able to believe her eyes. Though weak and pale, Mr. Abbott stood with a welcoming smile for the child who had caused him such grievous anxiety. At least her unnatural conduct had given back the physical limb-power lost so long, and now each day the wonder of recovery increased with returning strength.

Mrs. Abbott had been sorely against his taking this sudden journey, but the early start and consequent fatigue seemed as nothing to him, with reunion ahead. At last his will conquered nervous debility. Quickly he told Jacinth this was the one atom of good gathered from all the nightmare

happenings of the past. As she poured forth her story, with one hand in Mrs. Abbott's and the other clasping her father's, she explained there were yet more rays of brightness in the sorry tale. Yesterday's terrors had shown her what splendid heroism dwelt in the heart of Basil Hope. The love which she had accepted in the past as hers by right, came now as a marvellous and unexpected gift, a blessing she could never have hoped for after Ziba's double dealing. She begged Basil to tell them himself the good news of his brilliant prospects. Somewhat shyly, and with characteristic humility, he explained his new position to his future father-in-law, marvelling at the sight of Mr. Abbott moving in the world of men.

When Jacinth's mother realized all her child had endured, the horror of it turned her momentarily faint.

"So the black bird was an omen of evil," she said, after telling how the strange intruder had shattered the looking-glass in Jacinth's room. "Your father, too, had an extraordinary premonition of approaching danger. Let us remember never to ignore such warnings granted for our guidance."

The young couple turned the conversation from dreary subjects to an eager discussion of immediate wedding plans. The idea delighted Mr. Abbott, since he had never contemplated the joy of attending

the church service, when the happy event took place.

"We could be quietly married here in London by special licence," Basil explained. "I am sure you will agree with me it is wiser not to have the ceremony in Riverpool. When Jacinth returns there, it had better be as my wife. She will have to remain in London until the end of the trial, and if we are married, it will enable you to go back peacefully to Briar Cottage."

Mrs. Abbott gave a sigh of relief. The thought of chaperoning Jacinth to the court of law, had held innumerable terrors for the nervous, home-loving woman.

"Basil has made everything so easy," she declared with a happy look at her husband. "I am sure, Hugh, dear, we can give our consent to the wedding taking place as soon as convenient. I only wish that dreadful Ziba Wayne was at the bottom of the sea. Who knows in the future he may not plan some horrible revenge upon Jacinth for showing him up, and the miserable wife he tried to murder?"

Mr. Abbott smiled away the natural fear, declaring—

"Wayne's tongue will be silenced for many a long day, and if he is ever released, I do not suppose much energy would be left in a gaol-bird of such long standing."

Now thoroughly weary from the journey, Mr.

Abbott consented to retire to bed, the landlady having supplied ample accommodation for the whole party.

"You have a nice new white dress you can be married in," said Mrs. Abbott, as Jacinth was leaving the room.

The girl shuddered at the recollection of the gown bought for baptism. The thought of the last night she had worn it in Ziba's company, made it hateful in her eyes.

"I am afraid it is an unlucky dress," she told her mother. "I should be far too superstitious to wear it on my wedding-day. I think the little blue muslin you made me, will be more suitable. That is Basil's favourite colour."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MARRIED

SUNBEAMS were glinting through the stained glass windows of a London church. But for their fairy-like presence, it would have appeared a dark and cheerless edifice. The rows of empty pews gave no warning that a marriage ceremony was about to take place. The clergyman hurriedly robing in the vestry, knew the many vicissitudes through which the bride and bridegroom had just passed. Their names were already familiar to the public, by reason of the sensational articles chronicling recent events in South Tottenham. For this cause the hour of the service had been kept secret. So curious is the "man in the street" that he and his womenkind would have thronged the building, for a sight of Basil and his newly-made wife before their appearance at the Mormon trial.

To the outer world the blue-gowned figure of the exquisitely fair bride was merely a casual visitor to an old-world church, often inspected for its many curiosities. She entered quietly at a side door, supporting, with her mother's aid, a man who

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walked feebly. Before Jacinth took her place at Basil's side, she assisted her father into a front seat, Mrs. Abbott undertaking the office of giving her daughter away. Beside Basil stood Carson the one invited guest welcomed there, not only on account of his able professional services, but for the sympathy he had shown the bridegroom from the first. No words were needed to tell the deep joy reigning in the hearts of the happy couple. Ecstatically they made their vows, the summer sun enfolding them, flooding the church with its silver radiance. No music of song resounded through those arched aisles, but Jacinth fancied she heard the triumphal chant of a spiritual victory, over the dark host of evil ones who recently encompassed her. The brief service concluded, Jacinth, flushed and smiling, refused to conventionally leave the church on her husband's arm.

"Let us both help father," she said to Basil. "He shall walk between us."

Tenderly the newly-wedded pair guided Mr. Abbott to a waiting conveyance, bidding him good-bye before turning to their own carriage. As the parents drove away, they saw a small newspaper boy rush up and shout some lusty intelligence close to the bride's ear.

Jacinth paused with one foot on the step of the brougham. The shrilly-uttered words were unmistakable.

"Suicide of a Mormon Elder. South Tottenham Tragedy."

For a moment she could not speak, but signed to Basil to buy the paper.

Together they read its contents, as they drove to their destination.

"At noon, to-day, Ziba Wayne, the arrested Mormon, while trying to persuade a leading counsel to take up his case on the telephone, shouted down the receiver—

"Your refusal will bring its own damnation. This is the end."

"A few moments later he fell forward dead, having swallowed enough prussic acid to kill ten men."

For a moment Jacinth appeared aghast, then she realized that Fate had swept her evil genius from her path on the very day a new life started. Though horror-stricken at Ziba's action, it flashed across her this meant freedom also for Hester.

"Better death than life imprisonment," said Basil, throwing down the paper, and drawing Jacinth closer to his side. "That sinister influence is safer underground. Think only now some horrible menace to humanity has been removed from the world. This action proves his guilt, he could not face exposure. Darling, don't let this news cloud the bright beginning of our new life. Look up and smile at me. Do not give one thought to-day to the man who so well deserved his punishment."

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Time sweeps aside many remembrances. Soon the dark past will vanish, like those awful hours of fear in a Mormon stronghold."

Jacinth shook off her depression with an effort. She could not regret Ziba's death, only for the moment it had turned her cold, as she realized the blasphemous voice was silenced for ever.

"All his depravity, all his crimes, can be forgotten in the grave," she murmured. "We need never breathe his name again."

The smile Basil had asked for, broke over Jacinth's face as she looked down on the gold ring which told its own story.

"Married," she said. "Two whole lives changed by one short word of seven letters—seven—a lucky number, you know."

"The same as Jacinth," he replied. "Kiss me, Jacinth Hope."

In the shadows their lips met, and the ghost of a faded away under the light of glowing eyes

THE END.

